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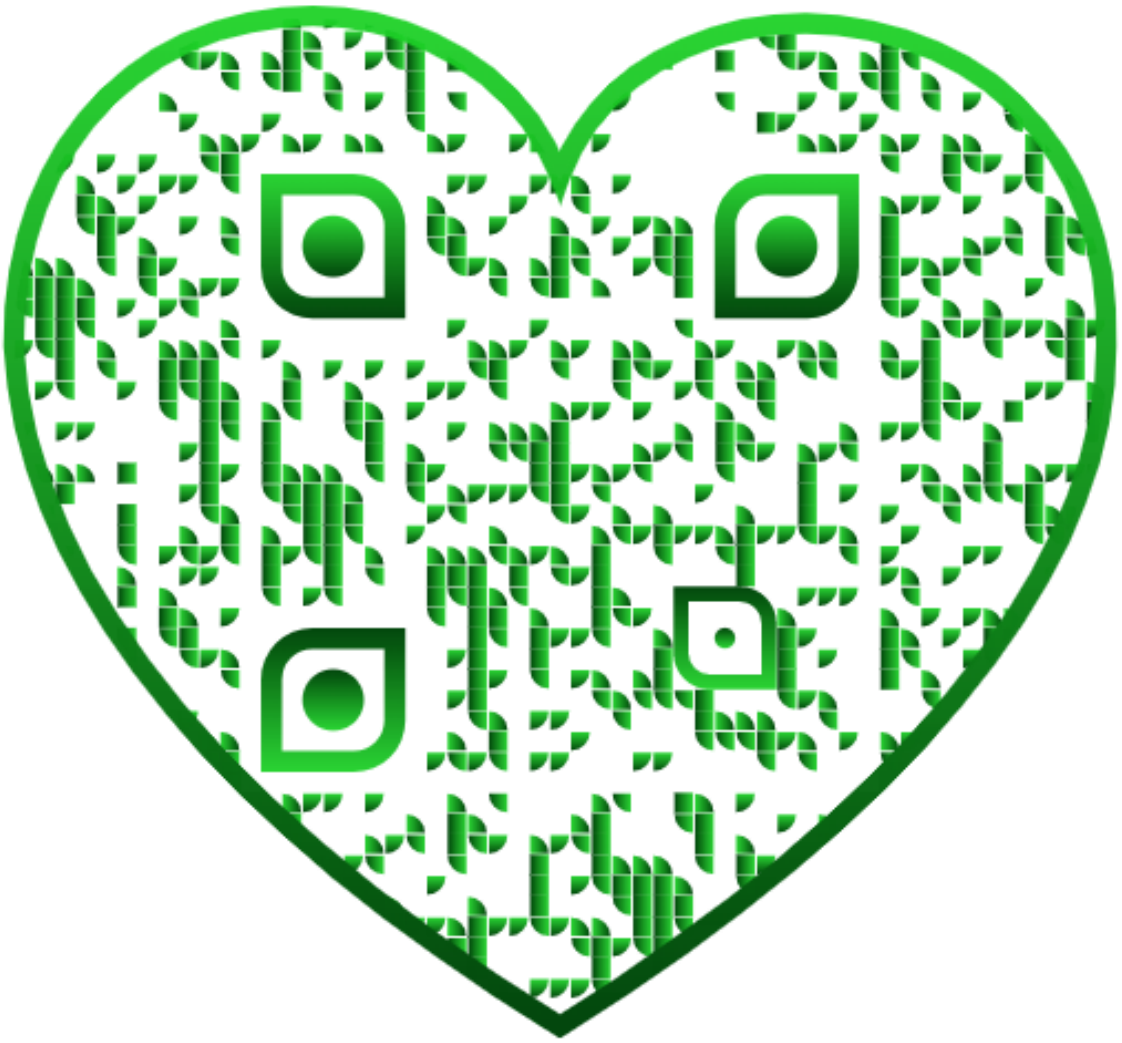

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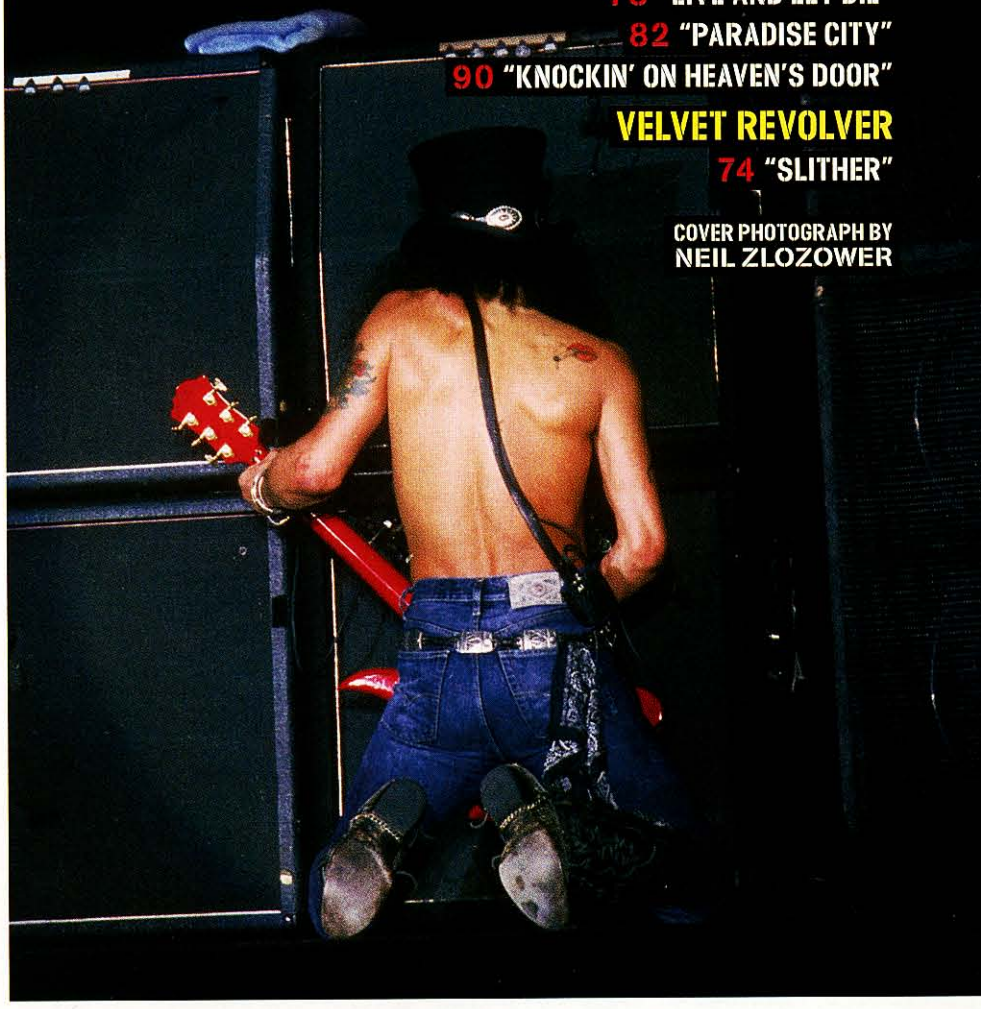

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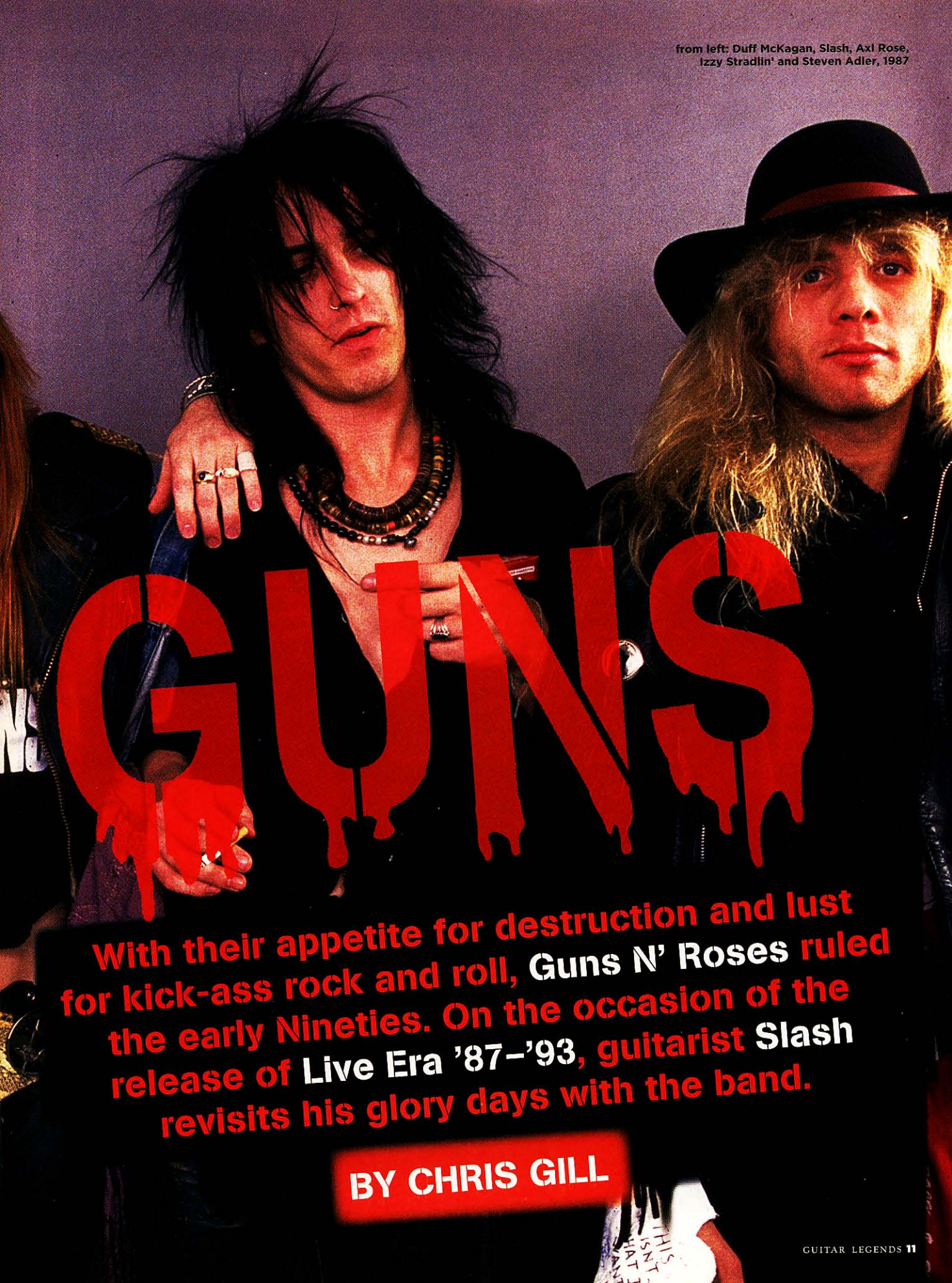


from left: Duff McKagan, Slash, Axl Rose, Izzy Stradlin' and Steven Adler, 1987

GUNS

With their appetite for destruction and lust for kick-ass rock and roll, Guns N' Roses ruled the early Nineties. On the occasion of the release of Live Era '87–'93, guitarist Slash revisits his glory days with the band.

BY CHRIS GILL

Guns N' Roses made it in the first place by being an effective live band," says former GN'R guitarist Slash. "I'm really proud of the albums we made in the studio. But it was in our live shows that you could see the band's true colors."

There's no question that Guns N' Roses' studio albums captured the group in all its raw, aggressive glory. But as Slash contends, the Gunners' live shows were a beast of an entirely more primal nature. That much is confirmed by the new double-CD *Live Era '87–'93*. With blistering live performances of GN'R songs like "Welcome to the Jungle," "Patience," "Sweet Child O' Mine" and "Paradise City," *Live Era '87–'93* is sobering proof of Guns N' Roses' potency as a live hard rock group.

"It's not pretty, and there are a lot of mistakes," Slash says of the new album. "But this is Guns N' Roses, not the fucking Mahavishnu Orchestra. It's as honest as it gets. All the other bands in the mid Eighties were trying to have Top 40 hits—even bands like Mötley Crüe. We didn't care about that. We just wanted to kick some ass."

Which is exactly what Guns N' Roses did, beginning with the group's formation in 1985 and continuing through the early Nineties, when its founding members began to fall by the wayside. The phrase "sex, drugs and rock and roll" may have been coined long before Guns N' Roses came along, but no other band has defined that expression as thoroughly. From their escapades with porn stars, strippers and supermodels to their public battles with illicit substances to the dramatic spectacle of controversy, riots and arrests, Guns N' Roses set a benchmark for badness that has only been topped by the most dangerous gangsta rappers. Considering the self-destructive tendencies of most successful rock groups, it's a miracle that all of its members are still alive.

While the individual members have survived the excess, the state of the band itself has been in question for the past five years. Since releasing 1993's *The Spaghetti Incident?* the group has undergone so many personnel changes that frontman Axl Rose is the only remaining member from the band's glory days. Axl, however, recently surprised doomsayers by releasing Guns N' Roses' first original recording since 1991, the aptly titled single "Oh My God," which undoubtedly is what most Guns fans gasped when they heard the song. The distorted vocals and industrial rhythms help to substantiate rumors that Rose was working with electronica artist Moby and Nine Inch Nails guitarist Robin Finck. But even the most forgiving Guns fans have to be wondering, Just what is Axl thinking?

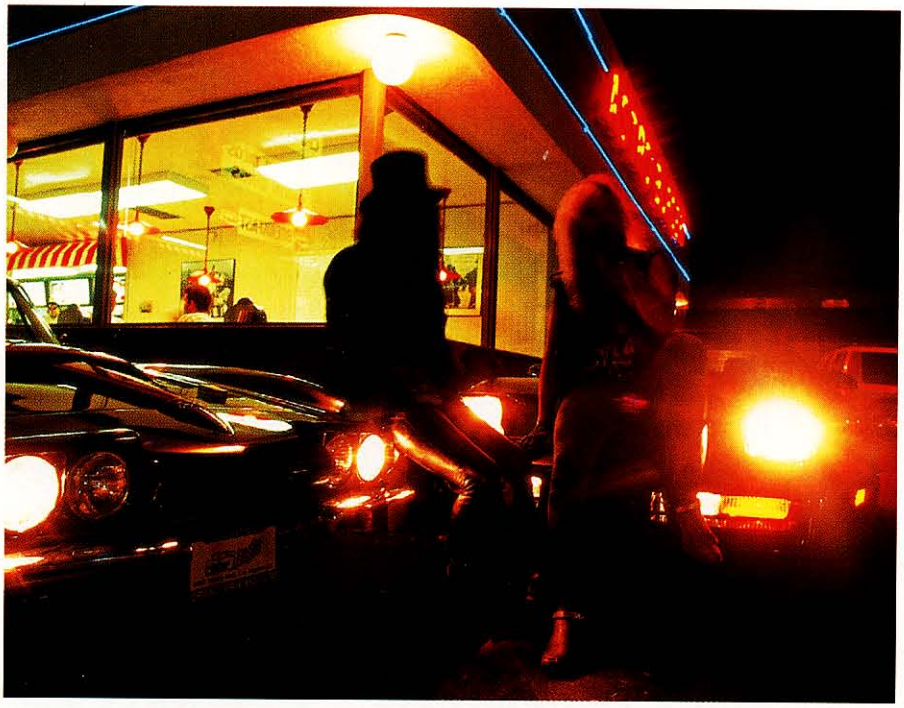
Of course, this is not the first time the fans have had to ask this question. Rose's behavior over the years has resulted in some of the most sensational moments in rock and roll history. He publicly chastised his bandmates for their problems with drug addiction, challenged actor Warren Beatty and former *Spin* publisher Bob Guccione, Jr. to fist fights and delayed many shows for hours or walked out halfway into a set.

But Rose's excessive behavior can almost be forgiven in light of the group's music and powerful live shows. *Live Era '87–'93* is stunning proof of just how powerful Guns N' Roses was onstage during the band's heyday. The first official GN'R release since 1993, *Live Era '87–'93* closes an important period in the band's history. For Slash, it brings his involvement with the group full circle, as it was a live album that introduced him to future bandmate Steven Adler when the two were growing up in Los Angeles.

"I knew Steven in school," says Slash, who was known as Saul Hudson back then. "He owned Kiss' *Alive!* album, and one day he invited me over to his house to listen to it. I was never really into Kiss, but Steven would bang away on his electric guitar with the amp cranked up and pretend that he was a rock star. I thought that was cool. That's when I decided that I wanted to play guitar."

Almost immediately, Slash got his first guitar, a beat up old nylon-string acoustic that had only one string, and started taking lessons from guitarist Robert Wollan. "Robert was the first person I knew who could actually play," says Slash. "He knew songs by Zeppelin and Rush, and he sounded just like they did on their records. Watching him play gave me the confidence that I could do it too. I really got into the guitar after that and played and practiced all the time."

While Slash was learning how to play, Adler took up drums, and the two jammed together at every possible opportunity. By 1984 they had formed a band together, naming it Road Crew after the Motörhead song "We Are the Road Crew." As Slash's playing progressed, he started working with other bands on the side, eventually joining London, a Hollywood Sunset Strip circuit band that also served as a training ground for future Mötley Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx. While playing in London, Slash was introduced to a guitarist



ROSS HALFIN

NEIL ZLOZOWER

named Jeffrey Isabelle, who had recently left his hometown of Lafayette, Indiana, along with his high school friend William Bailey to pursue the dream of becoming rock stars with their band, Hollywood Rose. In true Hollywood fashion, both had changed their names: Isabelle became Izzy Stradlin', while Bailey took the name Axl Rose.

Slash and Adler had problems keeping steady members in Road Crew, and in January 1985 they placed a classified ad in *The Recycler*, a local paper, hoping to recruit a bass player. Michael "Duff" McKagan, a young transplant from Washington who had played with several Seattle punk rock bands, answered the ad and got the gig. But like most aspiring rock stars at the time, McKagan was playing in as many other bands as possible to increase his odds of success. In March, McKagan met Rose and Stradlin', who had formed a new group with guitarist Tracii Guns and named it Guns N' Roses (an amalgamation of their former bands, L.A. Guns and Hollywood Rose). McKagan used his connections up north to book several gigs for the group in Seattle that June, but Tracii and the band's drummer disliked the idea and quit. McKagan suggested his Road Crew bandmates as replacements, and since Stradlin' and Rose were already familiar with the duo, Slash and Adler became members of Guns N' Roses without any questions or qualms.

But trouble dogged this Guns N' Roses lineup right from the start. "It was the tour from hell," Slash remembers. "We were just a few hours outside of L.A., near Bakersfield, when our Oldsmobile broke down. All of our gear was in this U-Haul trailer, and we had to leave it behind with one of our friends while we hitchhiked up north. Some crazy trucker gave us a ride, but he was taking speed, which freaked us out. He finally passed out somewhere in Oregon, and we bailed on him while he was sleeping. These chicks gave us a ride the rest

"PAUL STANLEY TRIED TO REWRITE OUR SONGS, INCLUDING 'WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE,' SO WE TOLD HIM TO GO TO HELL."

of the way. We opened for the Fastbacks on our first show, and since Duff had played with the band, he talked them into loaning us their instruments so we could play. We didn't make any money at all, but we didn't care, because we were on tour."

Fortunately, the group had better luck when they returned to their home turf, and they quickly made a name for themselves on the club circuit, working their way up from dives like Raji's to showcase gigs at the Roxy, Troubadour and Whisky-A-Go-Go. While most other Hollywood bands were dishing out tame-sounding, glam-inspired pop, Guns N' Roses stood out from the crowd with their raw, bluesy tunes and street-punk attitude. "We were gutter kids," says Slash. "We had no money, we were hungry and we all lived together in a one-room studio apartment. A lot of other bands at the time were these spoiled rich kids who were just posing. We got noticed because we were real."

Eventually Guns entered the studio to record a demo tape with producer Spencer Proffer, who had worked with an unlikely combination of artists, including the Little River Band, Quiet Riot, Tina Turner and W.A.S.P. Soon major record labels and wishful potential managers were lining up with cash in hand. "We'd take advantage of anyone who was dumb enough to let us," says Slash. "We didn't give a shit. All these suits would take us out to dinner, and we'd run up the bill by ordering as much as we could drink. They'd get pissed off at us, and we'd just laugh because we didn't want to do business with people like that. They didn't understand the band at all. Paul Stanley wanted to produce us, and Axl and I talked to him only as a favor for Steven. But Paul tried to rewrite our songs, including 'Welcome to the Jungle,' so we told him to go to hell."

Regardless of the Guns' increasing notoriety, contract offers kept on coming in, and the group kept on refusing them. But when Tom Zutaut, an A&R representative from Geffen Records who was known for signing Mötley Crüe, approached the band, they finally took an interest. Zutaut's successful track record meant nothing to them; they were more impressed by the fact that he was a fan of the same type of music as them. "When Tom told us that he thought we were the best band he had seen since AC/DC, that pretty much closed the deal," says Slash. "All these suits we talked to knew nothing about rock. They had no idea who Aerosmith was. We trusted Tom because he understood what type of band we were, and he wasn't going to try to change us."

Guns N' Roses inked its contract with Geffen in March 1986, and the label set about the arduous task of finding them a manager and a producer. It took several months: the most suitable candidates declined the opportunities due to the band's increasingly notorious reputation. Finally, Mike Clink, who had engineered one of Slash's favorite live albums, UFO's *Strangers in the Night*, agreed to take on the challenge, and the group entered Rumbo Recorders to make their debut album, *Appetite for Destruction*.

At Geffen's instructions, Guns N' Roses were forbidden to play any shows while they were working on their first album. To keep the band visible, build a buzz and help establish street credibility, the label funded the *Live?!*@ Like a Suicide* EP, which was released in December 1986 on the group's own Uzi Suicide label. It was a wise decision from a marketing standpoint, but an incredibly dangerous move on a personal level.

"We got really bored, because we couldn't do any gigs," says Slash. "That's when all the problems with drugs started happening. We developed some bad habits because everyone wanted to be our friends and were always coming around to party with us." It was the beginning of a self-perpetuating cycle that almost stopped Guns N' Roses in its tracks. The more the band partied, the more the album was delayed. The more the album was delayed, the more bored they became, so they partied. By the time the album was completed, several members had developed serious addictions.

The pace started to pick up in June 1987, when Geffen issued GN'R's first single, "It's So Easy." Three shows were booked at London's Marquee Club, and the band headed overseas to make their European debut. "Those were the first publicized live shows that we did as a signed band," says Slash. "I was born in England, and it was very important for me to play in front of an English audience. The version of 'Mr. Brownstone' on the live album was recorded at one of those gigs. I was just playing a Les Paul through a half-stack back then, but it sounded so cool."

ROSS HALFIN

Appetite for Destruction was released in July 1987, but the album initially drew more attention for its cover illustration by Robert Williams, which depicted a woman who had been raped. The cover was quickly withdrawn, but the controversy lingered and the band was criticized for its misogyny. Even so, the publicity wasn't entirely negative, and the Gunners earned kudos for their live performances opening for the Cult, and for their hard-hitting single "Welcome to the Jungle." Axl and Slash were soon compared to rock's other dynamic vocalist/guitarist duos—Steven Tyler and Joe Perry as well as Mick Jagger and Keith Richards.

Everyone seemed to have an opinion about Guns N' Roses, but success eluded the band for several months. They were enormously popular in Los Angeles, where they ended 1987 with a sold-out, four-night run at Perkins Palace, and they enjoyed constant rotation on the hard rock radio station KNAC. The rest of the world took a while to catch on, but by April 1988 *Appetite for Destruction* entered the *Billboard* Top 10, and in July it reached No. 1. Thanks

to the one-two punch of the singles "Sweet Child O' Mine" and "Paradise City," the album remained on the charts for a staggering three years afterward. To this date it has sold more than 20 million copies worldwide.

The band had gone from the gutter to glitter, but their situation wasn't exactly a bed of roses. During their first headlining U.S. tour, in 1988, Axl began to let his temper get out of control, picking a string of fights with security guards, parking lot attendants and hotel guests, and at one point walking out on the band. At the Castle Donnington Monsters of Rock festival in August 1988, as Guns N' Roses performed before their biggest audience to date, two people were killed in the crush of overzealous fans who rushed the stage. While touring as an opening act for Aerosmith, the group managed to offend their newly sober heroes with their excessive drinking and open drug abuse.

The group reached new highs in November 1988, when they appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine and earned a Grammy nomination. But at the same time they received their harshest criticism ever. Geffen had just released the album *GNR Lies*, which featured the four songs from the *Live?!*@ Like a Suicide* EP and four new acoustic songs, including "One in a Million." Critics immediately zeroed in on Rose's lyrics to the song, which were viewed as being racist and homophobic. As is often the case, the controversy didn't diminish sales, and by February 1989 *Lies* and *Appetite* both resided in the Top Five of the *Billboard* album charts.

Meanwhile, the band had stopped touring and was laying low. Unfortunately, as with the band's previous period of inactivity, the downtime made the members more susceptible to the allure of their dangerous habits. In October 1989, Guns N' Roses came out of hiding to open several shows for the Rolling Stones at the L.A. Coliseum. But what should have been a triumphant return instead became an embarrassing public display of their problems. In front of tens of thousands of fans, Axl admonished Slash, Stradlin' and Adler for their abuse of heroin. For Slash, it was a startling wake-up call, and the following night he apologized to the crowd. But for the other culprits, it was the beginning of the end.

Instead of cleaning up his act, Adler spiraled deeper into addiction. His bandmates tolerated his dismal performance at Farm Aid in April 1990, but by July of that year the decision was made to fire him. "It was real hard

"A LOT OF OTHER BANDS AT THE TIME WERE THESE SPOILED RICH KIDS WHO WERE JUST POSING. WE GOT NOTICED BECAUSE WE WERE REAL."

TONY MOTTRAM/RETNA UK

to see Steven go, because he was my friend," says Slash. "He was a big part of what made us happen, and he had a great energy in the beginning. But when the rest of us straightened up and bounced back, he didn't." Matt Sorum, who played drums for the Cult, was quickly hired as a replacement, and the band began to enter a new phase of growth.

Guns N' Roses finally entered the studio in September 1990 to record the follow-up to *Appetite*. The band recorded 36 songs and made the ambitious decision to release two separate albums at the same time. It was a ballsy gamble that paid off, however, and *Use Your Illusion I* and *II* debuted at No. 1 and No. 2 on album charts all over the world when they were released in September 1991.

"For some reason the complications of putting those records together were endless," says Slash "We were getting the band out of a major drug haze, and getting it back together so it was a band. Plus, we were dealing with success, which affected everybody in different ways. For me it was a harsh reality to have my private life ripped open and in the spotlight all the time. But we got through that. We got through losing Steven. That was all mind-blowing. Looking back on it, I can't believe that we actually accomplished it."

Adding to the complications was the decision to begin a world tour before the album was finished. The Use Your Illusion tour started on May 24, 1991, in East Troy, Wisconsin, and ended more than two years later on July 17, 1993, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. By the end of the tour, Guns N' Roses had played 192 dates in 27 countries to seven million people.

Guns N' Roses was now a multimillion-dollar machine, but the big budget and professional production didn't eliminate the troubles. On July 2, 1991, less than two months into the tour, a riot broke out during the band's performance at the Riverport Performing Arts Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Apparently, a fan in the front

ROBERT JOHN/IDOLS

rows was taking pictures of the band, and the venue's security refused to do anything about the situation, despite Axl Rose's protests. Rose became infuriated and walked offstage in the middle of the set, sparking off a furious reaction from the crowd that left 60 fans injured and resulted in more than $1.2 million worth of damage.

"The was the most violent act I've ever witnessed in my life," says Slash. "But I could feel that something was going to happen long before the riot broke out. There was an unmistakable ugliness in the air that night. It broke out so fast that there was no way we could have stopped it. We were afraid that someone was going to die, ourselves included. We had hardly gotten off the stage when people started to tear the place apart. They brought down these huge stacks of speakers and completely ripped my amps to shreds. We had to hide in a van to escape from the parking lot, and even then we weren't sure that we were going to make it out of there."

The band had barely recovered from the trauma of the St. Louis riot when they were hit with another blow: on November 17, Izzy Stradlin' announced that he was quitting. According to Slash, his departure was inevitable: "His heart wasn't in being in the band by then. He lost interest a long time before he quit, and he was getting tired of being on the road." Guitarist Gilby Clarke, from the band Kill for Thrills, was hired as Izzy's replacement.

Despite the personnel changes, Guns N' Roses was more popular than ever, and fans welcomed the new members as if they had been there from the start. Although the band had started out defying the establishment, by now they had become the establishment. Perhaps the most telling sign of Guns N' Roses' acceptance was the band's appearance at the Freddie Mercury tribute concert at London's Wembley Stadium in April 1992. A few years after he was criticized for penning homophobic lyrics, Axl Rose performed Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" with Elton John—and at an AIDS benefit nonetheless. This may have been Rose's most shocking act of all.

But Rose's exhibition of tolerance didn't earn him status as a saint. Upon his return to the United States, he was arrested and charged with inciting the St. Louis riot. While performing in Montreal, Canada, on August 8, 1992, Axl cut the set short and caused yet another riot to break out, although it was nowhere near as violent as the incident in St. Louis. Fortunately, the remainder of the tour continued without any major problems.

The band was thoroughly drained at the end of the tour and decided to take a well-needed break. In November 1993, they released *The Spaghetti Incident?*, an album of punk rock covers that were recorded during the *Illusion* sessions. The album's title was an inside reference to Adler's lawsuit against the band for his dismissal. In an attempt to display the cruelty of his bandmates, the drummer had described an occasion where Duff McKagan ate his leftover spaghetti without asking permission—an episode described in Adler's legal documents as "the spaghetti incident." In classic Guns N' Roses fashion, the album stirred up yet another controversy, this time for the inclusion of a song allegedly penned by Charles Manson.

Meanwhile, McKagan, Clarke and Slash concentrated on solo projects while Rose mulled over the band's future direction. To Rose, the solo ventures were acts of disloyalty. Clarke was the first to go, and he was fired from Guns N' Roses in June 1994. Much to Slash's dismay, Axl started bringing around replacements of his own choice, including his high school chum Paul Huge and former Ozzy Osbourne lead guitarist Zakk Wylde. "Axl always had this vision of teaming me up with a guitar player who was going to stretch my boundaries," says Slash. "But he had no idea how difficult it is to get two lead players to meet eye to eye. Not only that, but you end up with a record that's overflowing with self-indulgent guitars. I still come from the old Guns N' Roses school, where I do what I do, which is play lead, and the other guitarist does what he does, which is play rhythm. That always worked the best for us."

Needless to say, these sentiments didn't sit well with Rose, and by October 1996, Slash was the next member of the band to get the ax. The following April, Matt Sorum announced that he was quitting, and by the summer of 1997 Duff McKagan had left as well. Meanwhile, Slash has assembled a new lineup for his band, Slash's Snakepit, and he's putting finishing touches on their second release. "I needed to keep myself busy while I was trying to figure out if Guns N' Roses was still going to happen," says Slash. "Rather than sit and dwell on things, I would keep booking gigs and take offers on any projects that looked interesting. I'm still doing that because I like to get out and play. I'm a musician, and I'll always be that first. I never cared about becoming a rock star.

"Guns is still close to my heart," he adds. "I'm loyal to the day I die, I suppose. We weren't out to change the world. We were just doing what we liked to do. But the success put a lot of pressure on us. Now that the pressure is off of us, we're probably getting along better than ever. I still have a great amount of respect for everyone and their individual talents. The live album was one of the easiest projects that we all worked on. I didn't actually see Axl, but we communicated via the powers that be. Izzy and Duff came by my studio a few months ago, and it was weird. They looked all grown up. I was the only one with a cigarette and a drink in my hand." ■

ROSS HALFIN

AGONY N'

Guns N' Roses' Slash & Izzy Stradlin': Raunchy

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GLEN LA FERMAN

EXCESSES

guitars and reckless reps. BY JOE BOSSO

IT'S ANOTHER PERFECT WRECK of a Sunday afternoon in downtown Los Angeles. While thousands of dazed denizens attempt to piece together fragments of the previous night's misadventures for either themselves or some like-minded compatriots, the very object of many of their fantasies is polishing off his morning cocktail. For the man known as Slash, Guns N' Roses' volatile, rakish lead guitarist, living the crude values extolled on the band's debut, *Appetite for Destruction*, has become something of a fulltime occupation.

Sleep—an increasingly rare indulgence for Slash—is a welcome but impractical notion. In just a few hours, Guns N' Roses is due to convene its first rehearsal in a month, a preparation for its maiden voyage to Japan. New Zealand will quickly follow. And then there's the business of writing and recording the follow-up to *Appetite for Destruction*, the raging slab of backstreet howls and disillusionment that came from nowhere and managed to sell over six million copies in the United States alone (ranking it behind *Whitney Houston* and *Boston* as the third largest-selling debut of all time).

"Yep, the pressure's kind of on," Slash admits sheepishly. "Still, it's nothing we can't handle. What I try and do is act as if nothing has really happened. So we sold a lot of records—big deal. It's not going to change the way we live or the way we try to make our music. Surface things will take a different course, sure, but the important thing for us is to just ignore it."

Slash's humble assertions notwithstanding, the fact is that indifference is something none of the members of Guns N' Roses appear particularly adept at. Pain and outrage have inspired some of rock and roll's finest moments, from Elvis Presley right on through to the Sex Pistols. In that spirit, Guns N' Roses' memory of a more squalid existence—at one point, the band shared guitarist Izzy Stradlin's ratty studio apartment, its members relegated to floor space—served as fuel for the dozen compositions that became *Appetite for Destruction*.

Taken as a whole, the album is a beautiful mess: noisy, nasty and, at times, overtly brutal. The roar of Les Pauls screaming through Marshalls (Slash's much-praised trademark sound) is nothing new, but the absolute conviction of execution, coupled with Izzy Stradlin's churning, Neil Young–style rhythm guitar, constitute a whole far greater than

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"WHILE EVERYONE'S TALKIN' ABOUT WHAT WE DID OR SUPPOSEDLY DID YESTERDAY, WE'RE ALREADY WORKING TODAY ON THE MUSIC THEY'RE GONNA HEAR TOMORROW."—IZZY STRADLIN'

its parts. All too often, the efforts of guitarists in search of "the big sound" result in nothing more than forced, croaking rumbles, Stradlin's and Slash's sound is authentically vicious—a reverent nod to the past and a watchful eye to the future.

There are some flabby spots. Some songs—"You're Crazy" and "It's So Easy"—seem dashed off and ready to collapse, while others—"Out ta Get Me" and "Anything Goes" promise much but, ultimately, spin their wheels. But the core of the album—"Welcome to the Jungle," "Nightrain," "Mr. Brownstone" and "Sweet Child O' Mine"—are fully realized evocations of late-Eighties excess and despair. Not since the glory days of the Eagles (whose message, sadly, was lost on most party-hardy fans) have the woes of the modern-day desperado been so palpably rendered. The songs set a high standard for future band efforts.

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Guns N' Roses' impact is manifest on the dozens of L.A. stages brimming with chest-pounding, bandana-wrapped posers who parade their "streetwise" selves. Ironically, the more these wannabe's huff and puff, the more the public seems to respond to the band they perceive as the real thing.

"It could be said that we have a pretty nasty history," admits Stradlin'. "The thing is, I don't give a fuck about the image that everyone buys. It's all been blown out of proportion, the 'bad-boy' thing, how much we drink, how much drugs we do or don't do. It's boring. While everyone's talkin' about what we did or *supposedly* did yesterday, we're already working *today* on the music they're gonna hear tomorrow."

Slash, for his part, sees the humorous side: "The image tag is an easy thing to finger us on. None of us are model citizens, I guess. But the musical end of it can get funny. Why, I'm already hearing people pulling out those wah-wah pedals, slipping 'em onto tracks, and subliminally sounding a lot like us. That's a compliment, but it's kind of missing the point, isn't it?"

Strap a guitar around Slash and an unbroken ribbon of riffs will inevitably flow. Not the phoney-baloney kind that routinely kick off most generic heavy rock excursions; but the classic, iron-fisted variety that assumes a front-and-center role in a song. Born in England in 1965 and raised in California, Slash developed a keen musical ear early on. Since both his parents worked in the business, at-home listening was readily encouraged. "This predates CDs or even cassettes," Slash recalls, "but we had something like a thousand records at home, all kinds of stuff. So, by the time I became interested in playing the guitar, I had a pretty acute sense of what I liked and why I liked it. That can be very important. I remember Jimmy Page saying once in an interview that the most essential element to being a good musician is being able to *hear* music in your head. If you can hear it, then you'll show yourself how to play it!"

A good theory, but rather difficult to test on the one-stringed Spanish guitar Slash started on. "Yeah, a lot of jumping around was required!" he laughs. "It wasn't a real bad guitar or anything, but it did have just one string—the low E string. I was real determined to learn, so just having a guitar was a start. I taught myself a bunch of songs on

just that one string. Then, when I finally went for lessons, the teacher just sort of looked at me and asked if I had another guitar. I guess I was kinda naïve back then. So, there was a long period before I had a real guitar.

By the time he owned his first authentic instrument, a Les Paul copy bestowed on him by a thoughtful grandmother, Slash was doggedly teaching himself licks off of records. "It was," he remembers, "the only way that could have worked for me. I wasn't real good with the lessons, though the guy I did study with, Robert Wolin, was a big help. He was an inspiration, in a way, because he had a band, one of those really good Top 40 bands, the kind that played all the classics, night after night. He was literally the most amazing player I'd ever seen. He turned me on to what the difference was between lead and rhythm, showed me how to recognize and play the different things that I was hearing on records. It was a lot of fun, really, because I'd bring him a record, he'd put it on, and he'd learn it right there, all the leads, everything note-for-note. When you're a teenager, the most amazing thing is seeing someone play 'Stairway to Heaven' right in front of you. So this teacher gave me the basics in just the right way, which enabled me to take things off of records and learn 'em myself, which is what I did for a long time."

Growing increasingly obsessed with the guitar, Slash, an admitted "fuck-up" in school, practically ditched the entire seventh grade to sit home and practice. "Your basic Seventies rock fare," he recalls. "Zeppelin, Aerosmith, Ted Nugent. The guitar just held this unshakable thing for me. About the only thing that interested me in school was this music harmony course, which I took because it was music and I figured that I'd be interested in it. The whole course was based around the keyboard—everything was written out. The interesting thing is that I got an A in the course, although I never really applied anything to the guitar. It didn't occur to me. The course, to me, was more mathematical."

Slash's equipment collection then mirrored his somewhat haphazard approach to playing. "The amp I had at the time was a Fender Twin, a black-faced one. I didn't know what I was holding on to, so I traded it for this piece of shit, this Sunn Beta Lead! Can you *imagine*? It had this solid-state crap head, it was just the worst! Man!"

The Les Paul copy met with a more merciful fate: "I wound up putting it neck-first through a wall. I don't know why. I wasn't able to get instruments I liked until I started working in this music store; because of that job, I was able to get some good deals. I got a B.C. Rich, then a real nice '59 Stratocaster and then a '69 Les Paul Black Beauty, which I really liked."

By the time Slash started gigging, a genreless void had developed on the Los Angeles club scene. The Knack explosion of 1979 evolved into a brief L.A. punk movement. However, it wasn't until a resurgence of heavy metal—a newer, flashier version, spearheaded by the likes of Mötley Crüe—that the Hollywood club scene finally got back in business. Around this time, different factions of what eventually became Guns N' Roses started jamming together.

"There was Izzy and Axl," Slash recalls, "and then there was Steven and I. And then there was us in different combinations. We weren't ready, though, and it didn't last quite long." Dissatisfied with the lack of progress, Slash quit for a time, surprising everyone

NEIL ZLOZOWER

by joining a black funk band. "A real odd choice," he allows, "but definitely a good move. We didn't play many gigs—I think we played just once—but we jammed all the time. It really helped getting my feel together, my sense of rhythm and overall approach. I'm really glad I did it. I feel it helped my attitude for when Guns N' Roses really happened."

"WE LIVE OUT A LOT OF FANTASIES, I SUPPOSE. BUT WE'RE NOT THE ANIMALS PEOPLE MAKE US OUT TO BE."—SLASH

"**I WAS SEVENTEEN** when I came out to California," Izzy Stradlin' reminisces wearily. It is another early morning—too early, by most rock-star standards. Any broaching of his personal history elicits hardened, almost pained responses from the guitarist who, despite the early hour, insists on talking; he speaks in hushed, measured bursts, drifting off occasionally, as if at any moment he could lapse into a deep, powerful sleep.

Born in 1962 in Lafayette, Indiana, Izzy moved around as a child. "Family stuff," he snaps without elaborating. "I grew up in Florida and moved with my mom to Lafayette. I started pissing around with a drum set, met Axl, and we hung out a lot. It was nowhere. We decided to put a band together. It was a bad time, being there. The people, the girls, it was so backward. The girls didn't even know how to dress when they went to gigs! So, the prospects were absolutely zilch. Axl and I were into anything that had a hard, loud beat. I think that's how we managed with all that was comin' down."

Packing his drums in the back of his Chevy Impala, 18-year-old Izzy decided to try his luck in California. The drums were quickly scrapped for a bass, which, in turn, was promptly exchanged for a guitar. "It was a natural thing to do," he explains, "though I really can't explain why. The music I was into and wanted to play lent itself better to the guitar. I was always into hard stuff, the Ramones, the raw power that stuff had, the sound of the chords. So I got this Les Paul, which was real good for barre chords—all I could really play at the time, anyway. Then I got my friend's guitar, a Gibson LG5, I think. I'd play that guitar to Ramones records forever.

"Soon after that, I got my hands on a Gibson Black Beauty, which I had for years. Before we went out on tour last year, I had to pay the rent, so I offed it!"

By the time Guns N' Roses re-formed (with new member, bassist Duff McKagan), gigs and notoriety came much easier than before. After debuting their new act at the Troubadour, the band became fixtures on the Hollywood streets, playing any gig that came their way. To all appearances, they were just one more ragged bunch of losers, going nowhere fast. But, as Slash says, there was a method to their madness.

"We basically junked a lot of our lives at that point to work on the band, to work on the music. Sure, it might not have worked, but that was the chance we had to take. We didn't know any other way, nor were we particularly interested in any alternatives. I guess we were sort of...fearless."

Holed up in Izzy's one-room digs, the band eked out songs on whatever equipment they happened to own that week, viewing their desperate situation as necessary fodder for their compositions.

"Some of the best stuff can be written out of dire times," Izzy states matter-of-factly. "Slash and I would throw riffs back and forth, which is certainly one of his major strengths. I write on anything—I did then, and I still do. I think that I wrote much of the stuff on *Appetite* on an old Harmony. It was pretty hilarious. Stevie would set up this suitcase and drum on it. Pretty crude. I would tape-record the whole thing on this little micro-cassette recorder. It sounded real good; that's how we wrote. I think maybe one day I'll press that stuff. So it doesn't matter what you write on, PortaStudios, eight-tracks. If you have a song that can cut it, it doesn't matter."

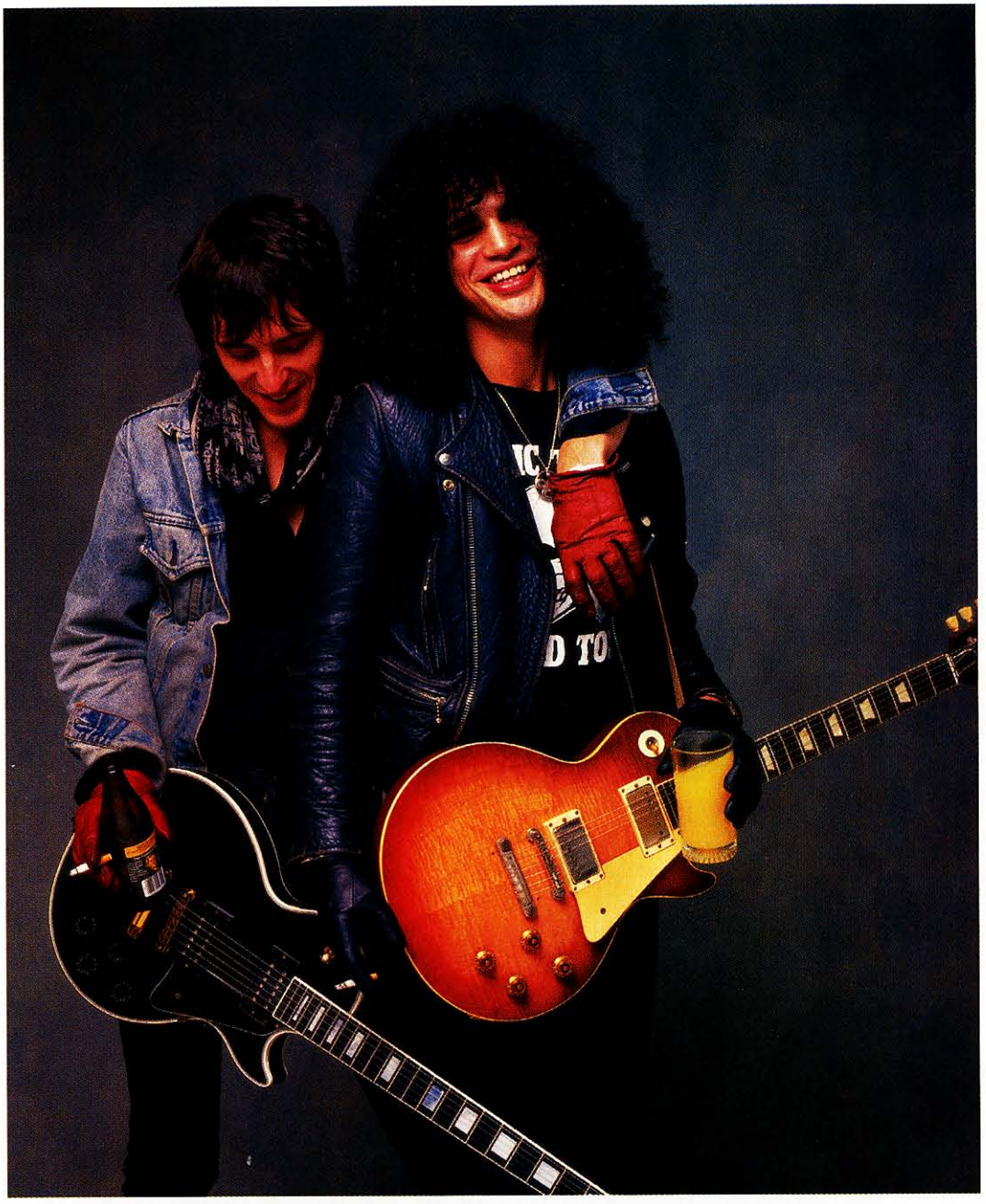
By the time the band—renowned for its live following and uncanny ability to manipulate the L.A. press—signed with Geffen, the twin-guitar team of Slash and Izzy had developed into a pernicious, ferocious, aural assault squad, more reminiscent of the early Clash, Stooges or middle-period Stones than anything resembling heavy metal. The lead-guitar duties, with rare exceptions, naturally fell on Slash, who had refined his technique over years of bad gigs and endless rehearsals. Next to Axl Rose, whose manic, incendiary vocals put him light years ahead of his hard-rock peers (this guy means it!), it is Slash, consistently outclassing his material (that's a compliment) with

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

witty, multi-faceted solos and transitional lines, who gives Guns N' Roses its most unique, powerful and expressive voice. While many contemporary players—the majority of them talented and blisteringly fast—approach an eight-bar solo by locking into a hand position and using that as a base for hammer-ons and pull-offs, concluding with a vibrato-arm dive-bomb or some other attention-grabbing gimmick, Slash appears to view such displays of facility as constricting.

"A lot of what I hear just isn't very musical," he explains. "It's not that I don't like playing fast, because I do. Especially if I've been playing rhythm for a while, because then I'll really be itching to come out and lay one on the crowd.

"I know most chord voicings, double-stops, different ways around, and I don't like to get stuck in a rut. Because I don't usually write any complete songs—all the changes—it gives me a lot of room to see what's going to work when I take the song to Duff or the rest of the band. I'm usually the guy in the band who's going, 'Wait, guys, let me work this part out here in rehearsals.' It takes me a long time to come up with parts that I'm happy with. When I write a solo, I try to hear what I'm going to play first—that way I can usually weed out the bad ideas pretty quick. I see a lot of these guys who are in one hand position, and they'll be going as fast as they can. It's real impressive, but it doesn't sound very good."



GLEN LA FERMAN

The solo to "Sweet Child O' Mine" is a perfect case in point. Rather than come out swinging, Slash weaves the first half into a provocative, almost Spanish acoustic-sounding splash of neatly connected melodic ideas before blasting into a frenzied wah-wah conclusion. It's a blur of lines, a bloodsquib that rises to the challenge of Axl's tragic, Romeo-and-Juliet-tinged lyrics. In short, a mini-masterpiece.

"I know I had to come up with something good." Slash recalls, "because the chord changes were fairly simple and straightforward. I probably use the pickup switch more than anybody else I see, which is because I don't like to use effects, really, not even a boost. So for the first part of that, I was on the neck pickup, and then I clicked to the bridge position for the crazier part. The second part was an overdub, and you can hear the transition, the moment where the first half is ending and the second thought is coming in. I don't mind that—it's a record. Live, I have to approximate the second half without the wah-wah, because I don't go onstage with any effects at all—nothing—because I'd just wind up kicking everything off the stage anyway. So I just rip into it a little differently. I don't think anybody notices, especially in the clubs.

"That's the way we recorded the album, with that thought in mind. We wanted the necessary studio polish, but with the live, raw feeling intact. It's a tricky thing."

Producer Mike Clink allowed the band only two weeks to knock out the basic rhythm tracks, all of which were recorded with the band playing together in one room with minimal baffling. Izzy preferred to play on one of two tracks, favoring feel over any discernable flaws.

"You can hear Izzy on the left speaker," Slash notes, "and I went for a stereo mix. I did my rhythm tracks with the band, but all of my overdubs and leads I did by myself in the control room. A few of the solos I wrote right there on the spot. It had its advantages, of course, but the only drawback to recording like that is that I like to use a lot of feedback—live, I use it a lot—and because my amp was out there in the room and I was in the control

"SOME OF THE BEST STUFF CAN BE WRITTEN OUT OF DIRE TIMES."—IZZY STRADLIN'

room, separated from it, I couldn't work that out. I'd still like to record the next album in that way, but I'd like to work the feedback thing out too."

Outboard "sweetening" was kept to a minimum. "I don't generally like sounds that I can't get myself," Slash states firmly. "I like the wah-wah because, to me, it's a natural, workable sound effect that is very musical. It got a bad rap because so many people abused it. I like the tone that a wah-wah can produce, the way you can make it scream and cry. It sings. I don't like the sound of flangers, though, because it isn't very human or lifelike. It's an automatic effect that you can't control much. No matter what you do, it'll just repeat the same fluttering effect at whatever tempo you set it at."

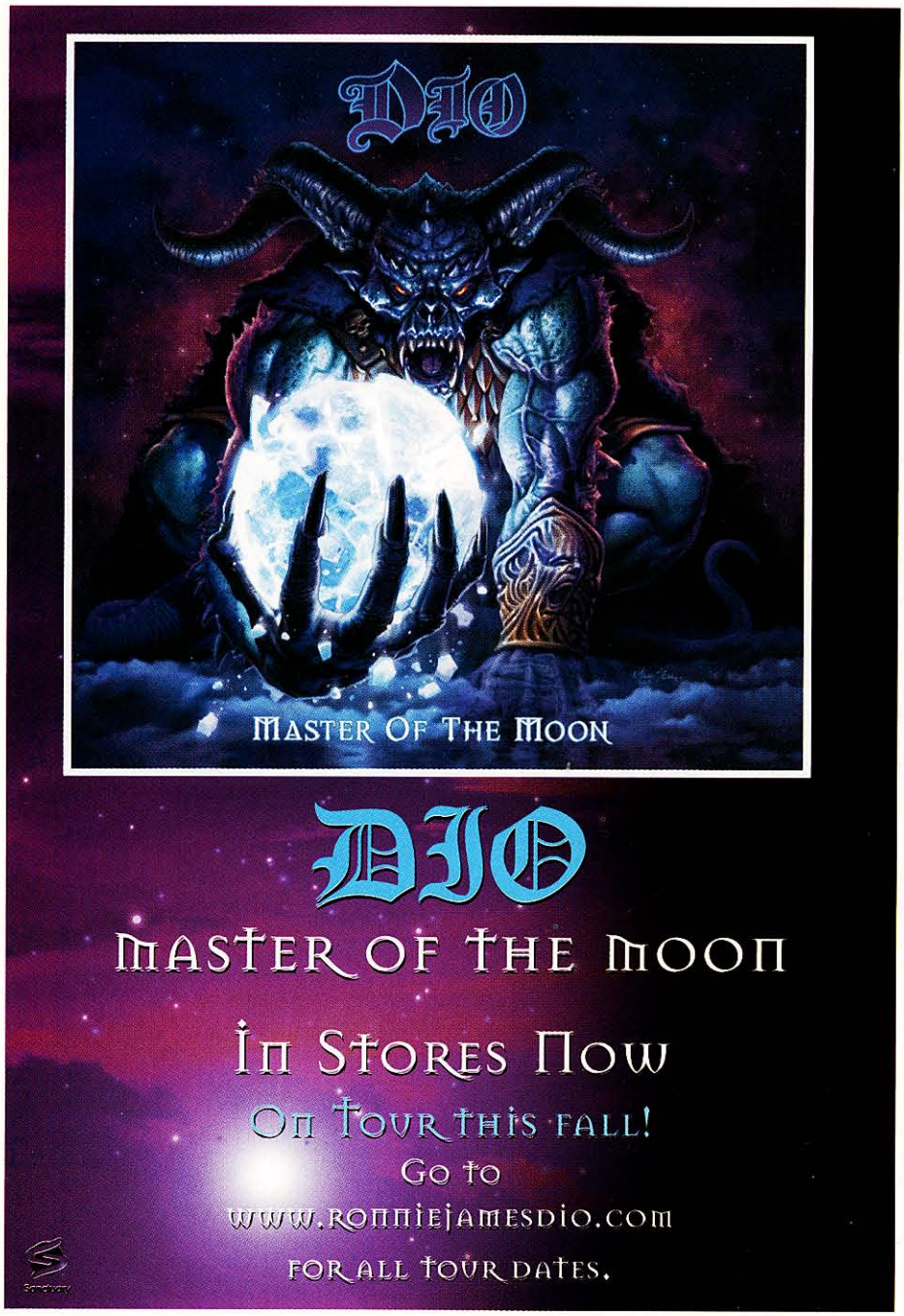
On "Anything Goes," Slash makes clever use of yet another attention-getting novelty item: the talk box. By trading phrases with guitar and talk box, he creates a mini-operatic effect, a call-and-response segment that is exhilarating, certainly the song's high point. "Again, people associate the talk box with a lot of misuse, a lot of indulgence. Go back and listen to what Peter Frampton and Jeff Beck did with theirs. I got mine from a guy who used to play in a disco band!"

As accomplished as their first studio outing is, Guns N' Roses appear to be in their element onstage, where they duplicate their recorded sound with almost eerie precision. There are trouble spots—tempos speed up and slow down, sometimes breaking down completely; Slash, in particular, suffers at times from moments of over-enthusiastic audience participation: The solo to "Out ta Get Me" is resplendent with savage, atonal bends. During a show at the Ritz in New York in early '88, a crazed female fan reached up and grabbed hold of Slash's guitar neck just as he was starting the solo, creating a spontaneous whammy effect. Oddly, it worked. "And it just happened to be captured on film too, 'cause MTV was taping the whole thing!"

Although audiences seem to revel in such moments of mayhem (and some fans seem all too willing to help the band push the panic button), the band generally gathers itself well. There is a sense of perpetual motion to the arrangements that is unbreakable. In the manner of Aerosmith on its classic Seventies releases (*Toys in the Attic*, *Rocks*), extended power-chording is kept to a minimum (Slash seems to eschew them altogether). Transitional phrases—verse into chorus, chorus into verse—are powered by Duff's sturdy bass-note runs, usually accompanied by Slash.

"Duff is a former guitarist," Slash notes. "That makes him real good with working out those parts. He thinks like a guitarist and won't just pump out quarter notes. Like those hidden bridges, the one in 'Welcome to the Jungle,' that roving part—that's his specialty.

"I don't know if anything we write is visionary or anything. We just don't like to sound like other people. We're real conscious of that. We don't spend a lot of time worrying about airplay or song length, but we seem to be able to come up with accessible material anyway. Because everyone has a say in the songwriting and construction of the arrangements, songs come out pretty interesting by the time they're completed. No one has a final say, though the guy who wrote the bulk of the song can voice his opinions a little more



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

strongly than the rest of the guys."

A Tascam eight-track recorder has been gathering dust in Slash's apartment for a short while. In his spare moments, he's been constructing riffs and song ideas in preparation for the follow-up to *Appetite for Destruction*. "I know I should use the eight-track," he giggles, "or even my four-track. But the ghetto box I have is so much faster to get your ideas down. Real high-tech, right?"

To satiate fan interest while the band is ensconced in the recording studio, Geffen has released *Live ?!*@ Like a Suicide*, a live EP issued on the band's own Uzi/Suicide label before their major-label deal. Only 25,000 units had originally been issued, making it quite the collector's item (it's been fetching upwards of $100 on the black market). Featuring a rollicking version of Aerosmith's "Mama Kin" along with four new acoustic tracks (unheard as of this writing), the EP is firm evidence of a band fully in control of its own vision and destiny.

"We're a lot of things," Slash concludes. "Yeah, we live out a lot of fantasies, I suppose. But we're not the animals people make us out to be. I drink a lot, I guess, but never during a show. I'm not drunk onstage, much to the contrary of certain reports. I couldn't be. Afterward, sure, the after-show festivities are kind of hard to turn down. But we're a lot more dedicated and smarter than a lot of the press would indicate. We couldn't have come this far otherwise." ■

ROBERT JOHN/IDOLS

SMOKING GUN

HIS GUITAR STYLE IS A MARVEL OF SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION. HIS LIFESTYLE IS PRETTY MUCH THE SAME. SLASH IS BACK, WITH—AND WITHOUT—ILLUSIONS.

BY ALAN DI PERNA

Reprinted from Guitar World, February 1992

LIKE THE BAD GUY IN SOME TV COP DRAMA, Slash has recently taken to hiding out in a Burbank, California, apartment complex. It's a very un-Slash kind of place, full of clean-cut, middle-management types in tennis togs and golf wear. But the suburban peace is periodically disturbed by bursts of amped-up, tranced-out blues guitar wails. Like telltale footprints, they lead a visitor straight to Slash's door. Several minutes of vigorous pounding finally fetches the apartment's famous occupant. He looks slightly startled.

"I thought you were the landlord, man," says Slash, opening the door.

In the time it takes to shake hands, the coil-headed cartoon character becomes a regular human being—a likeable, down-to-earth one at that. His cramped two-room pad is cozily trashed. "I had a couple of chicks up here last night," he apologizes with a sheepish grin. A Fender combo amp, resting atop the guitarist's traveling stereo system, hisses in one corner, opposite a TV set which mutely beams an episode of *The Frugal Gourmet*. Slash's trademark top hat rests on a pile of debris on the kitchen counter. A bottle of Absolut sits on a cluttered table. (It is sealed, I note. This will be a Heineken interview.)

The guitarist's domestic disorder parallels the topsy-turvy doings of his band over the past four years. Guns N' Roses have struggled with drugs, maturity, success, personnel changes and countless highly publicized scandals, rumbles and riots. The most recent upset has been the departure of rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin'. He's being replaced on the road by Gilby Clarke, a crony of GN'R's from their helter-skelter early years in Hollywood.

Yet for all the upheaval they have emerged triumphant with two new albums, *Use Your Illusion 1* and *2*. Simultaneously released, the discs promptly raced one another to the top of the charts.

Illusion is a sprawling, naïvely ambitious project (as much of rock and roll once was) which somehow hangs together—thanks, in large part, to Slash's stun-gun ax work. Despite powerful, manic playing for his own band and outsiders like Iggy Pop, Lenny Kravitz and, most recently, Michael Jackson, he remains a sadly underrated guitarist. Surprisingly, Slash is often his own biggest detractor:

"I'm not a technical musician at all. I'm not that great a right-hand picker, as far as speed picking and all that heavy metal shit goes." He laughs self-consciously. "It's all about emotion to me. I can sit on one note forever. I'm just trying to express myself as well as I can within the context of the song, and I'm really not concerned with breaking new ground or anything."

While emotion and spontaneity rank high with Slash, he seems to abhor permanence of any sort. He has a perfectly fine house of his own—a permanent house—just a few miles away from his Burbank digs. So why is he holed up in this crash pad?

BARBARA CASERTA/IDOLS

NEIL ZLOZOWER

"I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF TAPPING AS EDDIE VAN HALEN'S PERSONAL STATEMENT, AND IT WAS SO SHITTY TO SEE EVERYONE RIP IT OFF."

Perhaps, since Guns N' Roses are on a break in their tour, he wants to maintain the discipline of living in hotel rooms?

"Discipline? *Me*?!" he spreads his arms incredulously, grinning like Alfred E. Newman. No, Slash's natural state seems to be one of perpetual transition; he's always in the middle of doing several things at once. For example, he recently took advantage of the GN'R hiatus to slip off to Africa and photograph wildlife—an obsession of his along with guitars, cars, girls and all the more obvious amenities of life in rock's elite lane. Slash's embrace of chaos is very much in keeping with GN'R's early history, and it soon becomes apparent that things have always been chaotic for these guys...

SLASH Guns N' Roses began with Road Crew, a band that I started with Duff [*McKagan, GN'R bassist*] and Steven Adler [*ex-GN'R drummer*]. It was a killer group, but we just couldn't find a singer. Eventually, I met Axl [*Rose, GN'R singer*] and Izzy, who were in a band together. Axl and I formed a band called Hollywood Rose. We played together for a while, had a falling out and then broke up. Izzy and Axl reunited and joined L.A. Guns, which turned into Guns N' Roses—L.A. Guns plus Hollywood Roses. Eventually, Duff drifted into Guns N' Roses, too. But things weren't working out for Axl and Tracii [*Guns*]. So Axl and I patched up our past differences and I became part of Guns N' Roses.

GUITAR WORLD Do you feel that you've grown as a musician as a result of the *Illusion* albums?

SLASH I think the whole band grew. Aside from all the hype and bullshit that surrounds us, the individuals in the band are really conscientious about music and what we're doing. We never intended to be some huge popular circus; playing music has always come first. So I think we've grown a hell of a lot. We've gone through some really traumatic experiences—a tremendous amount of stuff—but on the positive side, all the emotion comes out in the songs.

GW What sort of traumatic experiences are you talking about?

SLASH Oh, just stuff. Women, drugs and Marshalls breaking down.

GW Life in general?

SLASH In my shoes, that's basically it.

GW On the *Illusion* albums, Izzy Stradlin' is credited with rhythm guitar while you're credited with lead *and* rhythm. How does that break down on any given track?

SLASH It's simple. Izzy, even on the songs he wrote, put on a very bare-bones guitar part—just basic chords. And sometimes, very

"I'VE NEVER MET AN ADDICT THAT WAS ABLE TO SUSTAIN ANY KIND OF CREATIVE OR FINANCIAL SUCCESS; THEY EITHER DIE OR LOSE EVERYTHING."

rarely, a single-note melody. He has one guitar solo on *Illusion I*—at the beginning of "Back Off Bitch."

GW You also solo on "Back Off Bitch."

SLASH Yeah, I play the main solo. I used to play this high-end trill thing for the first solo, but I could never play it consistently. So I just took it off altogether and let Izzy put a lead on, which is really a lot cooler.

GW Your solo on that tune is one of the few "contemporary-metal" style solos on the new albums.

SLASH Yeah. Well, it's a contemporary-metal style song. [*laughs*] I mean, it's so generic in that way. It's like E, D, D flat, D—that kind of thing.

GW Those fast arpeggios in there almost sound like you're tapping them.

SLASH I'm just picking them; I can't tap to save my life. I've never even seriously tried, though I do it as a joke sometimes. I haven't messed much with tapping because I've always thought of it as being Eddie Van Halen's personal statement, and it was so shitty to see everyone rip it off. Eddie's as great as he ever was right now, but he's being overshadowed by all his imitators.

The only thing I do along those lines is, if I'm playing a blues lick down on the fifth and third frets, instead of using a pick, I'll tap the same riff on the 15th and 17th frets to bring the whole thing up an octave. But I don't think I've ever recorded that—and I don't do it live because I don't want to be seen with my right hand on the neck. It's just such a cliché.

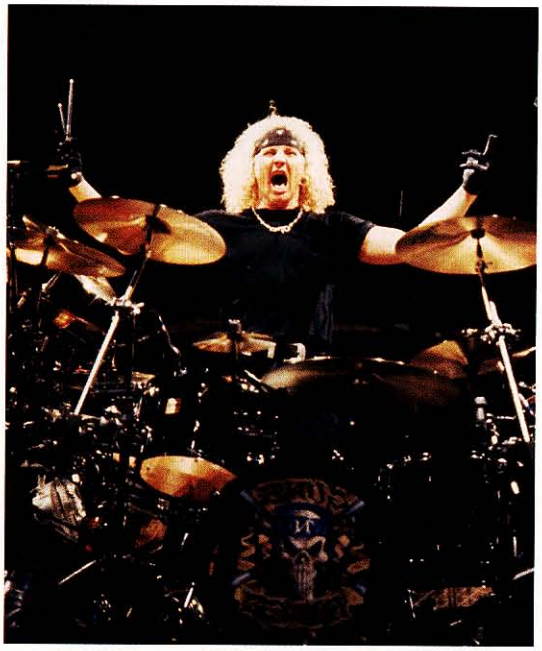
GW When did you begin working on the *Illusion* albums?

SLASH Well, the material basically spans the band's entire career. Some of it was actually written before Axl, Izzy and I met. Some of the material came from old ideas that we really liked, but never finished.

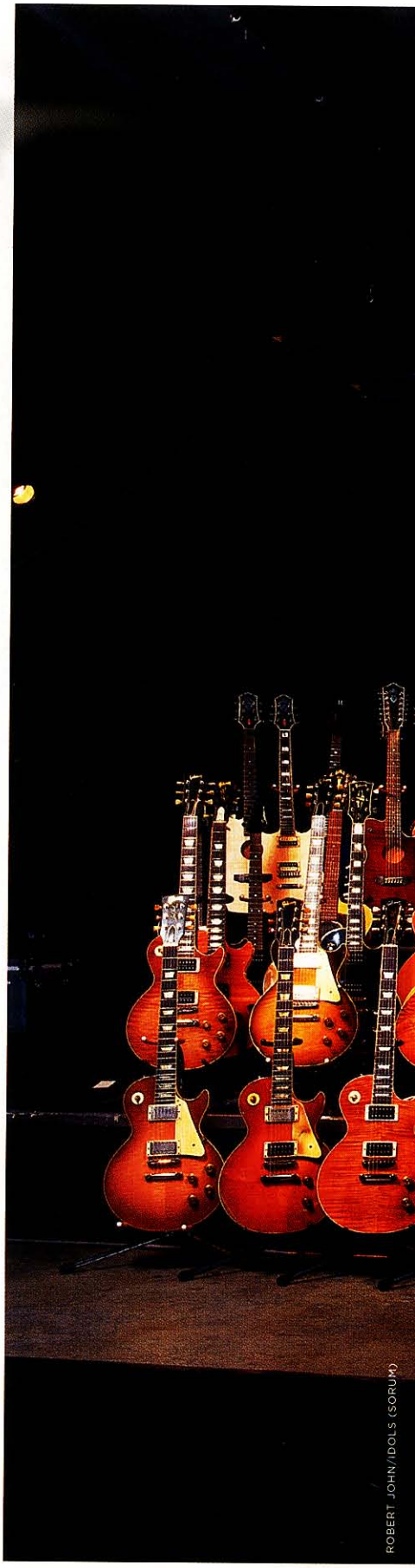
GW When you started the album, was Steven Adler still on drums?

SLASH Yes, that was the summer before last [*1989*], although those sessions didn't last long, mainly because of Steven. See, he never quite made it to that growing-up period that the rest of us went through. It was always just a big game for him—fun all the time. That's a rock and roll attitude, which I've always appreciated, but Steven was just out there [*on drugs*], and I had just come back from that. So he couldn't lie to me about it. But he still kept trying to lie.

I didn't want to go into the studio because his playing was so far off. He'll argue with me even now and say, "I played great." But he didn't—he couldn't. The guy was nodding out all over the place. That went on for a couple of months, and then I cancelled the studio time because it was a waste of money. So the only song on the album that Steven played on is "Civil War." He thought he was great, but we had to edit the drum track like mad just so we could play along with it. Even then, I had to remember where the drum mistakes were to keep the guitar in time with them.



You know, [*Aerosmith's*] Steve Tyler asked me the dumbest question one time: "Is there going to be another 'Welcome to the Jungle' on the new album?" Of all people to ask me something like that! Why should we want to do it again? But Steven [*Adler*] would have been happy just to do the same thing again on the new album. He wouldn't have made it through the record. And I don't mean to knock him. I'm just pissed off at him. I haven't said anything in public about it so far, though he's slandered us like crazy and is trying to sue us about stuff that's total bullshit. But I know for a fact that Steven's scared to death of me. Because I've known Steven since I was 13, and I know him too well. So I'm like, "Steven, what do you think you're doing?" But he's not even doing it; somebody else is pressing his buttons.



ROBERT JOHN/IDOLS (SORUM)

RICK GOULD (SLASH)

GW How did you find your new drummer, Matt Sorum?

SLASH We didn't know what to do at first. Obviously, we couldn't simply put an ad in the paper. We wanted someone who could fit in as a person and who could play, and we knew we didn't want to hire some session guy. Then I went to a Cult show on a whim, and Matt kicked ass. So we hired him. [*sheepishly*] Sort of stole him from the Cult. Let's just say we made him an offer. I was desperate! And Matt fit in within the first five minutes. No weird attitude. No rock star trips. None of that crap.

So we worked for a month on 30 songs and then went in the studio—I guess it was the summer of last year—and recorded basic tracks. We ran through 30 songs in 30 days. Then I worked on guitar parts and overdubs for five weeks. I played a lot of guitar on this record, though five weeks isn't bad for 30 songs. Axl went in and did vocals, then in the middle of the sessions we went out on the road. From that point, *Illusion* was thrown all over the place; we recorded the album in like 10 different studios or something.

GW Did hitting the road break your stride?

SLASH It broke the record company's stride! It didn't break ours. We were happy. They kept saying, "When are we gonna see that record, guys?" Our attitude was, We don't know. When it's done, it's done.

GW You grew up in Hollywood, around the music business. Does that help you deal with the whole rock stardom thing?

SLASH It helped me to get off drugs. I had already seen the patterns and I've never met an addict that was able to sustain any kind of creative or financial success; they either die or lose everything. Watching the people I grew up around subconsciously taught me stuff I didn't even know I knew. I think I'm lucky because I went through the drug trip early in life, as opposed to having it build up and hit me when I was 30. But I have to admit, I never really thought about drugs until I got to a point when I just realized that things were getting a little too hectic. I'm 26 now; it's been two years and I haven't had a problem with it. I'm no angel, but I'm not slamming and all that stuff.

And that's one of the reasons that Izzy, even though he's completely clean, has to be away from any sort of drug activity. He doesn't know how to deal with it. Whereas with me, people can do whatever they want and I don't give a shit. I'm comfortable being on the same planet with them.

GW A lot of recovering addicts have to isolate themselves completely.

SLASH Yeah I know, and I can't be around *that*. I hate that. Those people are so screwed up—they're clean but they're unhappy. It's like, "So-and-so was more pleasant to hang around when he was throwing up all over the place. Now I can't deal with him at all."

GW Is Izzy's recovery the reason he ostracized himself from the band?

SLASH That's probably one of the factors in his unhappiness. He was definitely struggling to keep himself clean. That's why he traveled separately from us and so on. But basically, we just came to the conclusion that Izzy wasn't putting in the time we thought was necessary for the good of the band. It had been building up for a long time. And finally Izzy came out in the open with me and Axl and said he didn't want to deal with the work that was involved. So we decided to work with someone else.

GW How did you find Izzy's replacement, Gilby Clarke?

SLASH When we decided to look for a new guitarist, I put the word out as discreetly as possible. A couple of my friends recommended Gilby—he's a guy that Axl and I sort of knew from Guns N' Roses' early days. He was in another band at the time, but we had lost track of him. Axl and I auditioned 17 guitarists or so, and he's the one who fit in the best. He had to learn about 30 songs in two weeks in order to be ready for the tour on time, and he's done a great job. We're really happy.

GW Rumor has it Dave Navarro, of

ROSS HALFIN/IDOLS

"I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW IZZY COULD LET SOMETHING LIKE THIS JUST FALL APART."

Jane's Addiction, was also considered for the position.

SLASH He didn't work out. He's got a little too much going on right now with his own personal situation.

GW Is Gilby now a permanent, recording member of Guns N' Roses, or is he just filling in for the tour?

SLASH Chemistry between musicians is something that takes a while to develop. So right now we're just touring. We don't have any plans for recording or writing together.

GW Has Izzy left the band for good?

SLASH That's something I have no idea about—how this is going to affect Izzy and his attitude. He may be happy not doing this anymore. Or he might really want to come back and make the effort that he wasn't making before.

I just can't understand how he could let something like this just fall apart. I mean the guy didn't want to tour or do videos; he hardly wanted to record. I just never thought he was one of those guys that this would happen with. It's a lot different than the Steven Adler situation. So I don't know what's going to happen a year from now: whether we'll be working with Gilby, Izzy or somebody else altogether. A lot of things are up in the air right now. But we've got a heavy duty tour going on, and we've got a killer band to do it.

GW Guns N' Roses now has a fulltime keyboardist, Dizzy Reed. Has that altered the way you orchestrate your guitar parts?

SLASH I had to get used to the idea. At first I thought, We don't need no stinking keyboards!, and I really gave Dizzy a hard time. He was the new guy, and I would be like, "You screwed up there. Just don't play." Now he's really part of the band and I love him to death. But he probably remembers how bad it was at first.

But getting back to your question, keyboards can be difficult to deal with, especially when mixing. It's difficult to balance them with guitars without sacrificing at least one instrument's dynamics. So I had to make sure I didn't lose the guitars' dynamics. I also spent a lot of time mastering the album, to ensure that certain guitar frequencies weren't lost. Now, I think the keyboards are great, especially live. They give us many more expressive options.

GW In contrast to *Appetite for Destruction*, there are a lot of different styles on the new albums. Did that lead you into using a lot of different guitars?

SLASH Yeah. I played about 20 guitars. I have my main guitar, a handmade [*replica*] Les Paul. But I also use Strats, and I use Travis Beans for slide, which I picked up from [*Aerosmith guitarist*] Joe Perry. I saw him play one once, and he sounded cool—and the guitar didn't look too funky. Looking cool is important with guitars.

I also use a Dobro for slide. I'm not a good slide player, to be honest. What I try to do is go for an unusual tone—just thick chords—but the licks are pretty generic, because I don't know much about slide playing and I don't sit around and practice it. I can't even begin to play slide on my Les Pauls because their actions are too low.

GW Your Travis Bean only has five strings. Which string do you remove? And how is the guitar tuned?

SLASH I remove the low E, and it's tuned to a variation of open G: G, D, G, B, G. But the Dobro was in regular tuning for (*Illusion*'s) "You Ain't the First."

GW How many guitars do you own in all?

SLASH About 45. I bought everything I used on the new album—and, let me tell you, it was a *very* expensive record. [*laughs*] For example, I used a Music Man—the model used by Keith Richards—for real light touches on certain songs. They're these little Strat things with interchangeable pickups. They're more airy than Strats. I also used Guild acoustic guitars: a 12-string and a big dreadnought. I used a banjo on "Breakdown." I don't know anything about banjos, so I just tuned it like a guitar. I bought a Gibson Explorer and a Gibson Flying V—the most expensive guitars I've ever bought.

GW Did you get real vintage ones?

SLASH Yeah, both of them are '58s. I didn't use the Explorer on the record because I got it afterward. But I used the V for "Knockin' on Heaven's Door." For certain things it has a killer sound.

GW Six-string basses pop up on quite a few songs.

SLASH Do you hear them? They're mixed in just to make certain songs more heavy. I also used one on *Appetite*; "Welcome to the Jungle" has one. You can hear this "*brriinnng*" in the chords when it goes to the slow parts; that's the six-string bass. I used to rent them, but I finally bought one. Unfortunately,

RICK GOULD

they're very inconsistent, those Fender...

GW Fender Bass IVs? Like a Jaguar-style body?

SLASH Exactly. Tobacco Sunburst or whatever. The intonation is way out and they're just a pain in the ass. But I finally found one that's usable, so I bought it.

GW But your main squeeze, of course, is the Gibson Les Paul. Do you generally prefer Standards, Customs or what?

SLASH Standards. I have a '58 and a couple of '63 Customs, which look great. One of them's got three pickups. But they're [*the Customs*] too thin-sounding for me. So everything else I use, besides the Goldtops, are Standards. I also have two handmade Les Paul copies, one of which is my main guitar—the one with the zebra pickups. The guy who made it is dead now. My other handmade Les Paul copy was done by another guy who also passed away. So I can't contact these guys to get another guitar. I got a Ouija board, but it didn't work.

GW Why a Gibson replica?

SLASH They're better than the ones made by Gibson. Sorry—I love Gibson dearly. They really try hard to give me guitars, but they just don't sound right. They're still trying to build me one. So mainly I use old Gibsons that I bought. I've spent something like $400,000 on guitars in my career. And Gibson's only given me three guitars that I use live. Two of them are the first two guitars they ever gave me, while the third's a Goldtop I got more recently. But even these I won't use in the studio—they're just not good enough. I'm real particular about tone. I can hit one chord, and if it doesn't have the right combination of warmth and brightness I just can't use the guitar. If the bottom is too low or the high is too high, it'll just bug me the whole time.

GW I've also seen you play a B.C. Rich onstage.

SLASH My first really good guitar was a B.C. Rich Mockingbird. But after the band got signed, we got strung out and I hocked it. Never got it back. But a while ago I bought another one from this guy I met at the Cathouse [*an L.A. club*] one night. I used it in the video for "You Could Be Mine." B.C. Rich saw the video and were ecstatic. They called up and I said, "If I could get one without the tremolo bar..." 'Cause that's the only problem with the one I have. The Floyd messes up the sound and the sustain. Sustain for days is my big thing.

GW One of your signature riffs—the main one in "Sweet Child O' Mine"—has incredible sustain. Was there any trick to that?

SLASH No. I still do it live, and it sounds pretty much the same. Les Pauls are great for sustain. I can find the right spot onstage, hold the G string in a certain position, and sustain it for 10 minutes. That's all that's happening on "Sweet Child."

GW What can you recall about coming up with that riff?

SLASH It was a joke. We were living in this house that had electricity, a couch and nothing else. The record company had just signed us and were on our backs. There was a lot of shit going on. We were hanging out one night and I started playing that riff. And the next thing you know, Izzy made up some chords behind it and Axl went off on it. I used to *hate* playing the sucker.

GW What kind of pickups do you like in your Les Pauls?

SLASH Everything has Seymour Duncan Alnico IIs, except for the old Les Pauls with the PAFs in them; I leave those the way they are. But Alnico IIs go right into anything else. The way I discovered those pickups was kind of a fluke. They came in that Les Paul copy I was talking about.

GW It's fairly well known that you re-cut all your guitars after you do basics, because you can't stand the sound of headphones.

SLASH I can't use headphones. It's very rare that I keep anything off the basic tracks. The basic tracks were especially a joke on *Appetite*; I was just there for the general feel for the rest of the guys. I got loaded drunk and played the basics with headphones on. Some good stuff came out of it, but I decided to scrap it all and go in and just blast out the monitors and overdub everything. The only time I kept anything through headphones was on a punk EP we did that's gong to come out eventually, which we mostly cut live in the studio. But on *Illusion*, I kept maybe one solo I did with headphones; they just sound so sterile to me and I can't play for shit if it doesn't sound right. I don't use any effects, but I do

NEIL ZLOZOWER

"I ALMOST WISH THE PUNK ATTITUDE WOULD COME BACK AND KILL WHAT THE RECORD BUSINESS IS RIGHT NOW. I HATE IT! I HATE BEING A PART OF IT."

use [*room*] ambience. If I'm playing at home, I turn the speakers a certain way, I can't play directly in front of a cabinet. So headphones are just altogether wrong.

GW Are your amps mainly Marshalls?

SLASH Yeah, I have one head and one cabinet. That's all I use in the studio. And I think I used a Mesa/Boogie for certain lead lines. Live, I use two Marshall stacks—one for clean sounds and one for dirty sounds. My guitar technician [*Adam Day*] switches between them for me because I can't use a foot pedal. I never know where I'm going to be, and I used to kick them off the stage. It's hard enough for me to use a wah-wah pedal. I have to have four of them onstage.

GW What kind of wah-wahs do you use?

SLASH They're custom-made by EMB Audio. [*Slash uses four pedals that feed a central module via cables with XLR connectors—Ed.*] They have a sound all their own. In the studio, if I want that real Crybaby wah sound I'll just use a Crybaby.

GW What kind of strings do you use?

SLASH Ernie Ball .010s. As far as picks...I know there's one here somewhere. [*Rummages through litter on the coffee table*] I just use the heaviest I can find. Tortex. Here, someone gave me this one.

GW So it's standard shaped.

SLASH So you're a player, right?

GW Yeah.

SLASH That sounds like something you'd say to someone in prison—"You play, right?"

GW Tell me more about this punk EP you mentioned.

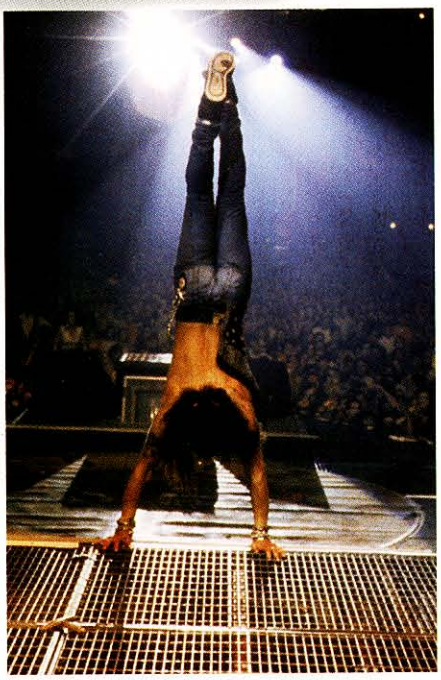
SLASH It's just a bunch of songs that different guys in the band really like. There's a Steve Jones/Sex Pistols song called "Black Leather." A song called "I Don't Care About You" by Fear. And "Ain't It Fun" from the Dead Boys—sort of a tribute to Stiv Bators. There's a total of six songs on it right now, and we're talking about doing a Hanoi Rocks tune.

GW Did you connect in a big way with the punk thing?

SLASH Yeah! I never went so far as to say, "Oh, punk is hip now, so I'm going to change my look and everything I do." It's just that punk was an attitude I totally related to. But it was only cool in its first year. By the time it came to L.A., it was just gay. I'm sorry. There were a couple of cool bands, but it was like the biggest poseur scene. I started playing during that time. I used to spend a lot of time at the Starwood, and down where the China Club is now. What was it called then?

GW The Cathay de Grande.

SLASH Yeah. I used to hang out there, and it was just the coolest; I loved the rebelliousness of it. I believe in that shit, and I dug the chicks, who were just great. I'm not a violent person, but I love that violent attitude. Even at our shows, it's part of our thing; break down the barriers and kick ass for three hours. I don't like it when it gets so violent that people are maliciously beating each other up. But the punk scene was a big influence, especially on Duff. I almost wish that attitude would come back and kill what the record business is right now. I hate it! I hate being a part of it.



ROBERT JOHN/IDOLS

We've always done everything in our power to stay away from the norm. But then all of a sudden we *became* the norm. *Appetite* took off, and what I call the copying period set in. And all of a sudden it was no longer fun to be in Guns N' Roses, to have that "go into a liquor store, rip off a pack of cigarettes and play your guitar all day" attitude. I think that's one of the main reasons we didn't know what to do with this new album. We were real frustrated with being so *acceptable*. We're not Mötley Crüe. We're not gonna do something that *appears* a little bit dangerous so we can sell records.

GW That sort of predictable "dangerousness" is so wimpy.

SLASH I know. "I'm gonna be dangerous right now, okay. I'll only be dangerous till I get to the bank."

GW Are Guns N' Roses to the Nineties what the Rolling Stones were to the Sixties?

SLASH I don't know. Those kinds of labels hit us all the time. That's one reason why, when we played with the Stones, I never took a picture with them or even made an effort to meet them. I'd love to meet them, but not on that level. There were so many paparazzi around. You know the theme: bad boy band of one era meets the new model. Screw that! But I'll tell you, the Stones are the only band I can listen to at a given moment, no matter what mood I'm in. I can listen to Aerosmith or AC/DC or Steely Dan for certain things. But I can always listen to the Stones; if I had to go on a desert island, that's what I would take. But I never think about trying to be the Stones or anything like that.

GW You met up with a formidable talent of another kind recently: Les Paul.

SLASH Yeah. I played on his tribute album, which is on hold right now. I knew the project was disorganized, but I decided to do it anyway. I put the band together with Iggy and [*drummer*] Kenny Aronoff. Fernando Saunders played fretless bass on it, but it didn't sound right, so I took it off and put Duff on it. And Lenny Kravitz does background vocals.

GW Did you do a Les Paul song?

SLASH No, no. We did a song that was supposed to be a Guns N' Roses song, but Steven could never play. It's a slow blues shuffle called "Burnout." It's really different now, though, 'cause Iggy's singing.

GW Did you get to meet Les?

SLASH Yeah. I jammed with him. It was the most humbling experience of my life. He and his rhythm player are amazing. They play chords like...I mean, how they get from one of these chords to the other just blew my mind. And Les is a great guy. Funny, eccentric and very, very, very smart. Once, before this tribute thing ever happened, he called me up out of the blue. I picked up the phone and was like, "Whoa, Les Paul!" We talked for an hour.

GW How do you feel about being considered the father of the "back-to-basics" movement in rock guitar?

SLASH I don't feel that way. I'm really proud of the work that went into these records, although most of the stuff was spontaneous. The guitar parts on *Appetite* were more worked out. With *Illusion*, I just did the guitar lines the day we recorded. In order to give each song its own unique quality, I'd do all the overdubs for one song before moving on to the next. And to this day I can't remember some of what I played. I can't duplicate it live. So I feel puny as a guitar player. I like what I do and I know where it comes from, and I'm proud of the fact that it is for real. But I'm way far removed from feeling like the father of anything. ■

TRIAL BY FIRE

SLASH AND HIS NEW PARTNER, GILBY CLARKE, DESCRIBE WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE THE GRADE IN THE WORLD'S MOST NOTORIOUS ROCK BAND. BY BRAD TOLINSKI

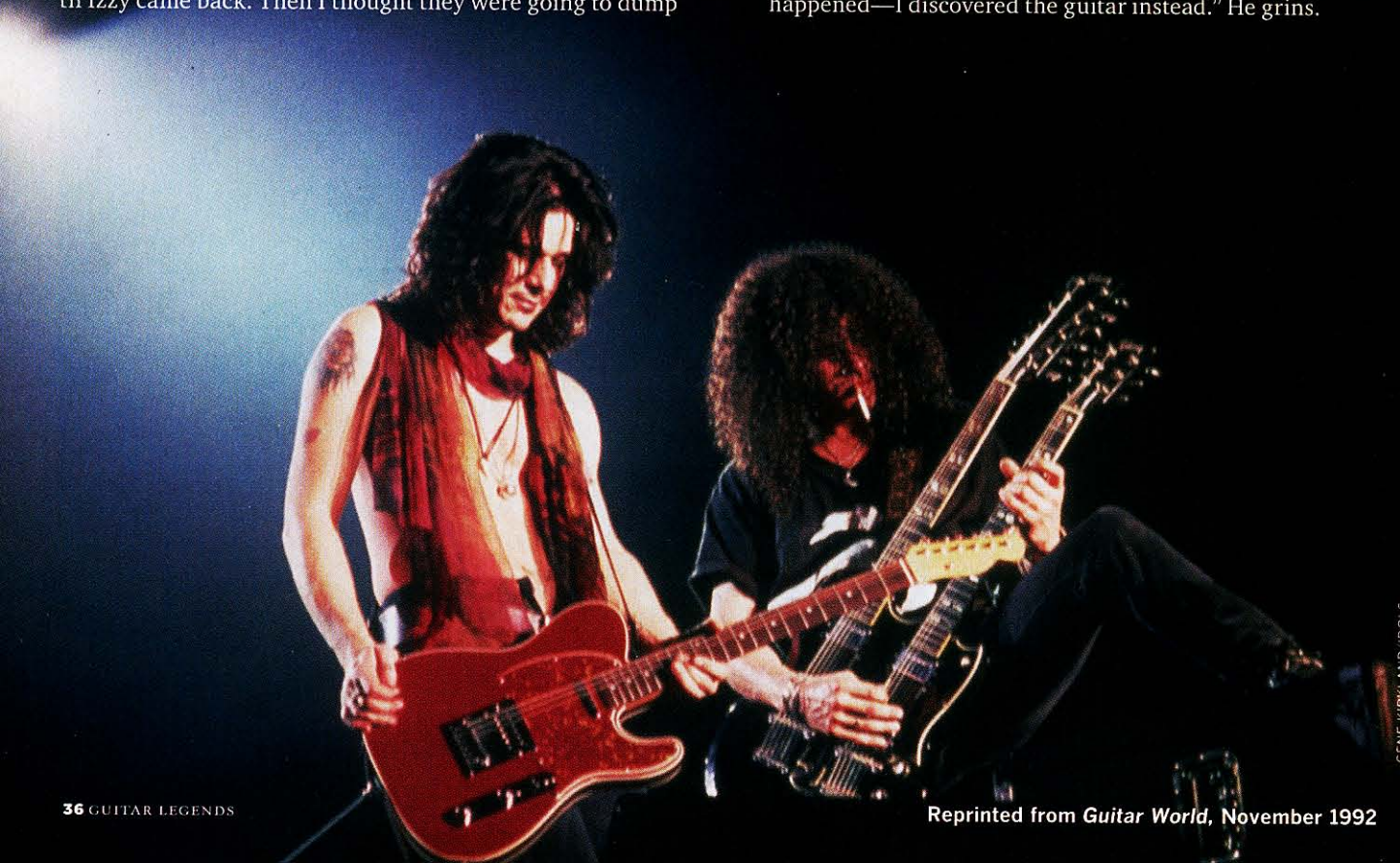
He ain't Izzy, but who is he?

Almost a year has passed since the announcement by Guns N' Roses that Gilby Clarke was replacing founding member Izzy Stradlin' as rhythm guitarist, yet the new man remains something of an enigma—a shadowy figure standing on the periphery of the world's most dangerous band. Is he an official member of Slash's secret society or merely a hired Gun?

There was a time when even Clarke wasn't sure of the answer.

"I never even thought I was going to make it to the first gig," he laughs. "I thought they were just covering themselves until Izzy came back. Then I thought they were going to dump me after our '91 Christmas break. But then Slash gave me this beautiful red Les Paul with an ebony neck. After that, I felt a lot more comfortable. You don't give somebody a present like that i things aren't going well."

Far from being the rock and roll equivalent of Clint Eastwood grim Man with No Name, Clarke is quite amiable. "I'm a gabber—I like to talk," he says, with the confidence of a man with years of experience working barroom crowds. "So, what do you need to know? I moved from Cleveland to Los Angeles in my ear teens. I was supposed to go to high school, but that never really happened—I discovered the guitar instead." He grins.



GENE KIRKLAND/IDOLS

Reprinted from *Guitar World*, November 1992

GENE KIRKLAND/IDOLS

Clarke claims that while he was never the best guitar player, he "was always the guy that was able to pull a band together." During the mid-Eighties, he built a solid reputation in Hollywood as a bandleader, fronting such power-pop outfits as Candy and the harder-edged Kill for Thrills. It was during this period that Gilby met Stradlin', who shared Clarke's enthusiasm for the Rolling Stones. "We both wanted to be Keith Richards," Clarke says dryly.

Was he nervous about auditioning for his old friend's gig? "I'm not a very nervous guy, I guess," replies Clarke in flat tones. "The only thing I remember clearly about the audition is that they had this taped-off area where Izzy used to stand, which said to me, 'Do you have what it takes to fill this spot?' That was pretty amusing."

Slash elaborates: "When Izzy left last year to pursue his solo career, we realized that we either had to find a new guitarist in three weeks or cancel a bunch of gigs. We didn't want to cancel any shows, so we started searching. I had a piece of paper with about 30-odd candidates listed, Duff was looking around and Axl had his ideas, but nobody seemed right. For a while it looked like Dave Navarro from Jane's Addiction was going to join, but he couldn't get it together, so that never happened.

"I was tearing my hair out, trying to figure out who to get. We obviously couldn't put an ad in the paper. Someone randomly suggested one of Izzy's friends, Gilby Clarke. I had thought about him, but I hadn't seen him since our earliest club days. So I called him up, and he came down. He was the only guy we auditioned. One guy!

"Gilby fit in so naturally that I figured it was a godsend; I didn't feel like we had to look any further. He just came in and did the work required. He's a great guy. He's a little older than I am, he's been on the road for a long time, and he's tough as nails. Gilby and I have become friends—that's how we relate to each other. We didn't want a session guy or some weird, star-fucker type who was into the gig for the glory, or to further a solo career. We wanted a dedicated band member, and he has grown into that."

In this, Clarke's first major interview, he discusses his role in GN'R, while Slash sheds light on the band's controversial tour with Metallica, as well as his latest projects with the legendary Jeff Beck and superstar Michael Jackson.

GUITAR WORLD Gilby, how well did you know Slash before you joined Guns N' Roses?

GILBY CLARKE I didn't know him very well. Ironically, the person I was closest to was Izzy. I met him around 1984, shortly after he moved to Hollywood, and we really hit it off. We were part of a small group of Keith Richards fanatics who were somewhat alienated from L.A.'s heavy metal scene. During that period, I was also the lead singer and guitarist in a moderately successful power-pop band called Candy, which had a record deal with Mercury and even did a major arena tour warming up for Rick Springfield [*the Australian heartthrob best know for his hit single, "Jessie's Girl"*].

Izzy and I eventually lost contact, because I was busy with the band. But the next thing I knew, he was in the hottest band in Los Angeles—Guns N' Roses. When I was in town, I went to see GN'R every chance I could because I wanted to support Izzy.

GW How did you learn that GN'R was looking for a replacement for Izzy?

CLARKE The news was definitely on the street. Though I asked a friend who was working with the band to mention my name to Slash, I was a little surprised when he actually called me on the phone to ask if I'd like to audition. I said, "Yeah, I think I can make that." [*laughs*] Then he said, "Learn three songs and come down tomorrow."

The funny thing is, I really didn't even learn the three songs. I just listened to a few things, got the keys in my head, and winged it the next day. I didn't really have any time to prepare beyond that.

GW What were the songs?

CLARKE To be honest, I don't really remember. I think it was "Civil War," "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" and one other.

So, after my audition, they asked me to learn some more songs and told me to come back the next day. This continued for a week. They never said I had the job, they just kept asking me to return.

GW Did you have any preconceived notions about the band before you walked in?

CLARKE Not really, because I knew them. I just decided that I was going to do things the way I normally do them. That way, if I got the gig, I wouldn't have to pretend that I was something that I wasn't. I wanted them to like me for who I was. If I was gonna be phony, they'd find out eventually, anyway. I wasn't going to try to be Izzy.

ROBERT JOHN/IDOLS

ROBERT JOHN/IDOLS

"I WANTED THEM TO LIKE ME FOR WHO I WAS. I WASN'T GOING TO TRY TO BE IZZY."—GILBY CLARKE

GW Didn't you play your first GN'R gig with them two weeks later?

CLARKE Yeah, it was ridiculous. Two weeks! After a week of auditions, Slash called me up and told me I had the job, and that the band wanted to start touring the following week. I had to learn 50 songs in one week, and play them in front of thousands of people. My second gig was Madison Square Garden!

I would come to rehearsal, play what I had learned, then go home and learn five more songs. I didn't sleep for two solid weeks—all I did was play guitar. To make matters worse, nobody really seemed to know what Izzy played. I would perform something, and Slash would say, "I thought you knew this tune." And I'd argue that I did. And then he'd say, "No you don't—you're playing *my* part!" And then we'd realize that you couldn't really hear Izzy's part on some of the songs. So then we had to try to reconstruct his parts the best we could. Duff knew what Izzy had played more than anyone, so I leaned on Duff a lot.

But it also might have been a blessing in disguise. It gave everyone in the band the opportunity to suggest a fresh approach. I think they were giving me stuff to play that they always wanted to hear, but Izzy would never do. So my rhythm parts are a combination of Izzy's original ideas and a few additional ideas provided by the band.

GW What was your first show like? Did you have chord progressions taped to your arms?

CLARKE My goal was to walk out with no cheat sheets. And I actually knew all the songs except for two. And I still have cheat sheets for those two songs to this day! I still haven't learned them. [*laughs*]

GW Slash, how do Gilby and Izzy differ, stylistically?

SLASH Even though the band always sounded cool, Izzy and I never sat down together and worked out guitar parts. We weren't really a team, in that sense. We would just jam, and he'd play things his way and I'd play things my way. And even though Gilby is essentially playing Izzy's parts, he adjusts them so there is more of a sense of unity—more a sense that we are playing together. This isn't to put Izzy down in any way, it's just that Gilby and I have a different relationship.

GW Did you ask Gilby to adhere closely to the original arrangements?

SLASH I told him to learn the basics and then take it from there. As the tour progressed, he progressed. I think it's important that Gilby puts his own stamp on our songs. It's important that he feels he can contribute creatively. A musician's self-confidence becomes vulnerable when he isn't allowed to do his own thing.

We hired Gilby because he is his own man. The last thing we needed was someone whose mind would've been blown at the prospect of playing with GN'R. We didn't need that kind of pressure, because we were trying to cope with the loss of Izzy. We needed to know that the person joining the band could hold his end of it together.

GW Have you at any point felt that maybe he wouldn't work out?

"I CAN BE THE LAZIEST FUCKER IN THE WORLD WHEN THERE IS NOTHING TO FOCUS ON. I'LL JUST WATCH TV AND FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF."—SLASH

SLASH No. I think I'm a pretty good judge of character, and I usually know within the first hour whether I'm going to be able to deal with someone. It just takes a few, short, casual conversations about nothing with someone to know whether I'm going to feel comfortable with them.

GW Gilby, in learning the band's repertoire, what songs gave you the most trouble?

CLARKE Without a doubt, "Coma." I still don't know it. It's like this 15- or 20-minute song with no repeats.

GW What song do you enjoy playing the most?

CLARKE Oddly enough, "Coma." I really love playing it because it's different every time. I also like "Pretty Tied Up" and "Locomotive." I like playing the fast, hard, ones.

GW Did anybody ever give you any instruction as to how to act onstage?

CLARKE No, not at all. Nobody has ever said what I can or can't do, or what I can or can't wear. That's not the way the band is—you just kind of feel your way around situations. Many things are left unsaid.

The same thing applies to the music. The most difficult thing for me when I was learning their material was copping the feel of the band. They would always say, "Lay back, man, lay back." It's not something you can articulate—it's something you feel. It probably took me a couple of months before I fell completely into their groove.

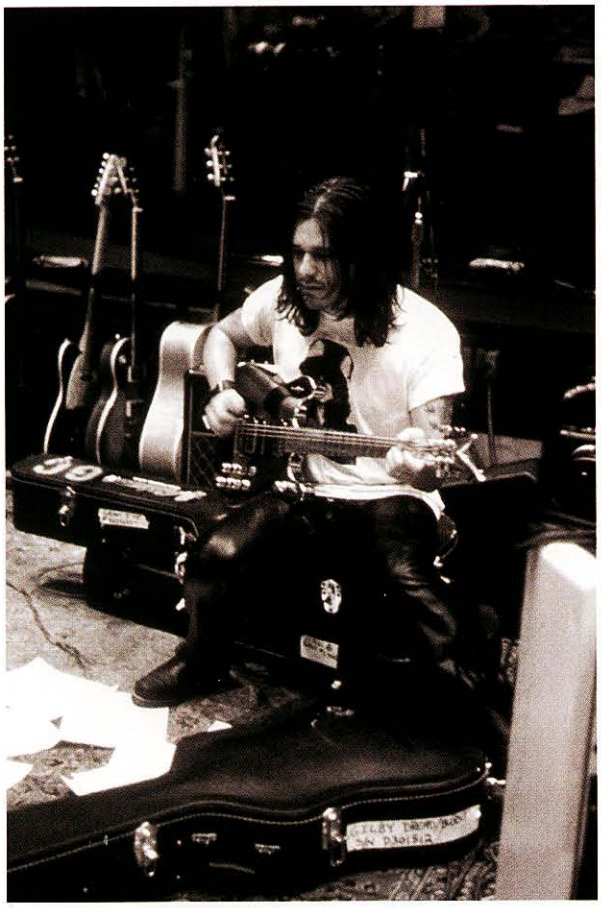
GW Slash, I understand that B.C. Rich recently made a custom guitar for you.

SLASH I've never told this story in an interview, but my very first guitar was a mahogany, neck-through, B.C. Rich Mockingbird with Bill Lawrence pickups. It was great. I had it for a long time, but I hocked it during my drug trip, and I'll never forgive myself for doing that. I didn't play a Rich for a long time after that. But one night I was down at the Cathouse [*an L.A. club*] and a friend of mine told me he had a Mockingbird for sale for $150. I bought it from him and started using it. B.C. Rich heard that I was using one of their instruments, and was stoked, so they made me four different models. I ended up keeping only one, because I'm a real stickler for tone and general guitar sounds. If there's one thing wrong with one I won't use it. But I really like the one that I kept. I'm using it a lot now. I haven't done an endorsement deal with them, but they seem happy enough that I'm using one of their instruments.

GW What do you look for in a guitar?

SLASH Different guitars do different things, but my favorite, all-around guitar is still a good, vintage Les Paul with PAF pickups. If it's a new Les Paul, I like to use Seymour Duncan Alnico II pickups.

Strats are a little too unpredictable for me. I wouldn't want to take the good vintage ones out on the road with me, and the new ones usually suck. However, I still like Strats. There are certain things that you can pull out of a Strat that you can't get out of any other guitar.



GW Just ask Jimi Hendrix.

SLASH [*laughs*] That goes without saying.

GW Speaking of legendary Strat users, Jeff Beck was supposed to make an appearance on GN'R's June Pay-Per-View concert. Why did he cancel?

SLASH I finally got to jam with Jeff Beck and we blew his ears out—literally! He was going to do that show with us in Paris, but for some reason his rig wasn't working, so he plugged into my system. Later that night he woke up with this insane screaming in his ears; he had to go to a hospital and everything. He called me up, and I was thinking, Wow, Jeff Beck is calling me on the phone. But he was calling to say he was pissed, and that he might not be able to play live anymore because my amp gave him tinnitus [*an ailment that creates a ringing or buzzing sound in the ear*]. He was freaked. I guess doctors are working to make him a custom hearing aid that cancels out the frequencies that are bothering him. I mean, that's mind-blowing. If someone was to tell me that tomorrow, I'd be destroyed. Man, I hope he's okay.

GW I think he's all right. I've heard that he's working on a new record.

SLASH I know he can do studio work, because he played on Duff's new record. But I'm not sure about live performance. I don't think it was really my fault, but my rig was the straw that broke the camel's back. His tinnitus was probably brought on by years of abuse. But I still feel bad, because Jeff is truly one of the greats. I was in a jam session with him, Joe Perry, Lenny Kravitz and Gilby, and Jeff was playing all this amazing shit while simultaneously talking to me. I wanted to pack it up that day, send the amps home and find a nice, little job selling life insurance or something. I was thinking, Hmmm, real estate—there could be a future in that. [*laughs*]

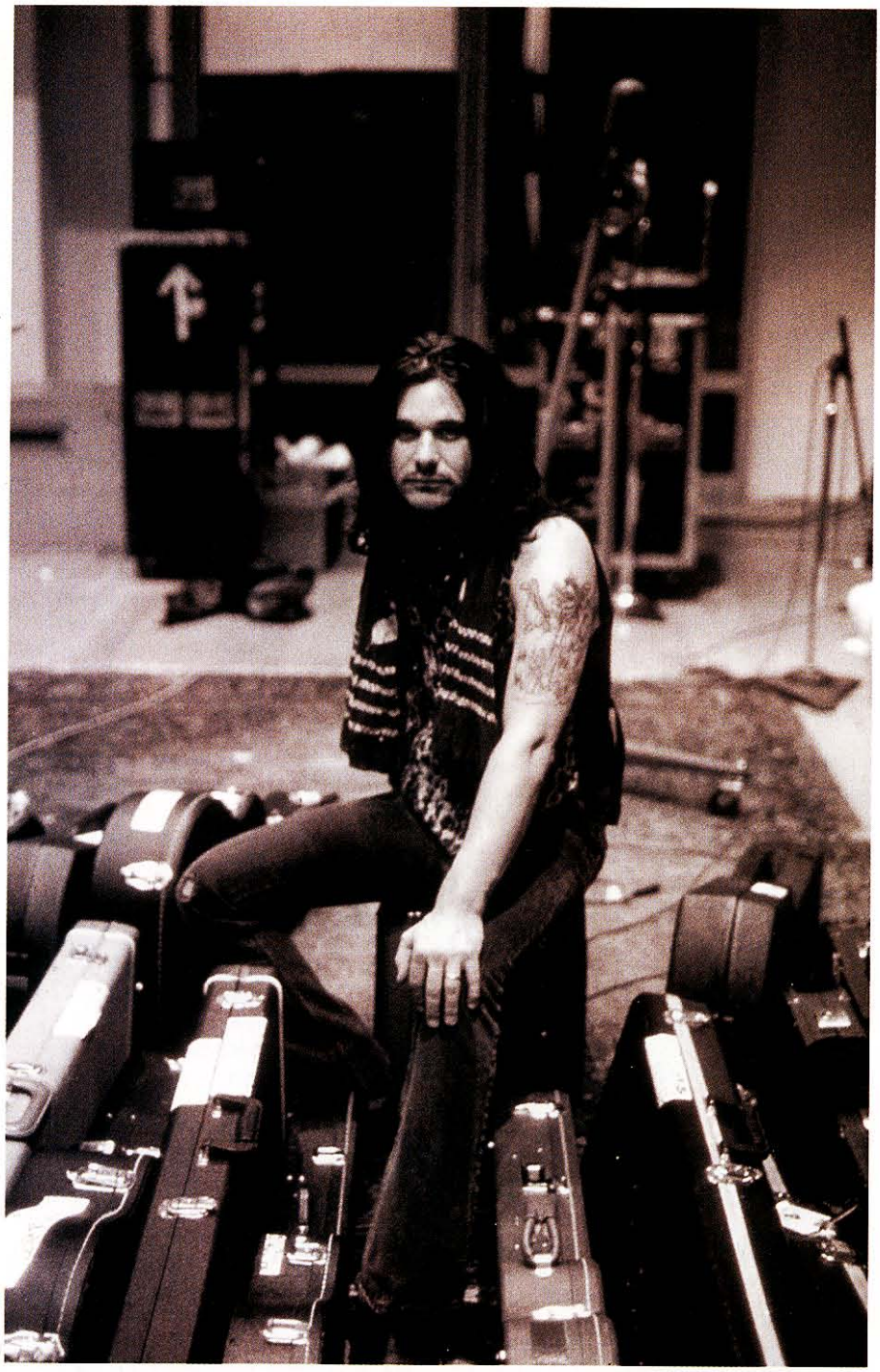
GW Gilby, what are you using these days? You're a Vox man, aren't you?

CLARKE Yeah, I use nine Vox AC-30 reissues. They're all new, because vintage amps are too unreliable to take out on the road. When I got this gig, I made a promise to myself that I was going to take advantage of the opportunity, equipment-wise, and get everything I ever wanted. The first thing I bought was a new Marshall stack. But my tone was so close to Slash's that we ended up sounding just like one big wall of mush.

So I took the opportunity to start carving my own identity. I've always liked Voxes, though in a club they were always too loud. But they turned out to be perfect onstage. The Voxes have a really great, natural tone, so I basically turn them up to 10 and play completely dry.

My two main guitars are a Zemaitis that I just had custom-built and a clear, lucite Dan

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: GENE KIRKLAND/IDOLS



Armstrong. The Armstrong is really loud and it sustains forever. I was using a Les Paul during the early parts of the tour, but for some reason, it just didn't sound good running through the Vox amps. I think it's because Voxes are mid-rangy by nature and so are Les Pauls, so the sound is muddy when they're used in tandem.

GW You mentioned earlier that you were into Keith Richards. His influence comes through on your solo spot. I thought it was a bold move to get up and simply play "Wild Horses" by the Rolling Stones.

CLARKE I didn't even know that I was getting a solo spot until the day before the first gig! They just came up to me and said, "So what are you going to play in your solo segment?" I never even thought about it. I mean, why would I get a solo segment? So then Axl said, "Well, Izzy always used to do a little solo before 'Patience.' Do you think you can come up with something?" I just didn't want to get out there and do a lead guitar thing. Slash is the lead guitarist. So I decided to play "Wild Horses," which is one of my favorite songs. Lately, I've been doing a slide guitar thing around the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." Both of those songs tell you where I'm coming from.

GW Slash, you play two or three solo guitar spots per show. Is that by personal choice or do you do them to save Axl's voice?

SLASH It's pretty off-the-cuff. In the first several shows of the *Illusion* tour, I would play solos to fill in the gaps while Axl figured out which song to play next. As the tour continued and the set began to solidify more, we ended up just keeping a few spots open. For example, I never expected my rendition of *Godfather* theme to become a permanent part of the set—it just happened, and people came to expect it. Everything just evolved naturally.

GW Do you have the solos worked out in your head?

SLASH I don't like to play unaccompanied all that much, so over the last few shows Dizzy [*Reed, keyboardist*] and I have started working out a blues duet that I think works really well. It's a 12-bar thing in a minor key, and I love doing it. But so many things factor into whether I'm going to play an extended, unaccompanied solo. A lot depends on how well I can hear myself in the room. I can't stand directly in front of my cabinets, because they're too dry, so I depend on the house mix. Because we don't do soundchecks, the first thing I do after I hit the stage is find different sweet spots on the stage. If I can't find a good spot, then I'm sunk for the rest of the show. If I do find a good-sounding area on the stage I can wail my ass off, and I'll play more and longer.

GW How do you cue the band to let them know you're going to take an unaccompanied solo?

SLASH I don't. I just play. Sometimes it fucks up, sometimes it's magic.

GW Is it still exciting for you?

SLASH I love playing the guitar, and I like to practice at home in front of the TV, but I don't really get juiced until I'm creating onstage.

GW On one level you claim to be a workaholic, while on the other hand you seem somewhat undisciplined outside of an actual playing situation.

SLASH I like being excited, which is why I have so much trouble when we have time off. When I get up in the morning, I need to have something to look forward to. I'm not very self-motivated; I'm not one of those guys that can get up and say, "I'm going to write a great song today." But if someone focuses me on something, I'll work my ass off. But usually someone or something else has to provide the impetus. I can be the laziest fucker in the world when there is nothing to focus on. I'll just watch TV and feel sorry for myself. [*laughs*]

GW You've appeared on recordings by many other artists. Is that one way you keep busy?

SLASH Yes, but I'm always afraid that people are going to start thinking of me as

GENE KIRKLAND/IDOLS

"I DON'T LIKE TO GO ONSTAGE UNTIL I'M MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY READY. HOWEVER, I'LL ADMIT THAT THREE HOURS IS PUSHING IT." —SLASH

some half-assed session guy. On the other hand, playing sessions keeps me focused on something constructive when Guns isn't playing.

For example, Michael Jackson just called me up. He wants me to go to Europe and play a gig with him somewhere, and I'm going to do it because I can't stand doing nothing. I also just finished helping him with his next video, "Give in to Me." He gave me a *lot* of space.

It's funny. Everybody thought I played the main riff in "Black or White," but that isn't me. To be honest with you, I don't know who the hell is playing that riff. Most people think that I played the whole thing because Michael really publicized that I played on the track. The only part I played is in the beginning, when the little kid is playing air guitar in the video.

I played much more on "Give in to Me." I played the whole rhythm part and solo. It was very loose. I was just jamming to the track, and Michael came down with Brooke Shields. I asked, "Is this cool?" And he'd say, "Anything you want, Slash."

When it came time to do the video, Mike put the whole thing in my hands! I picked the director and organized the band. Gilby is in it, Tony Thompson is on drums, Muzz Skillings is on bass, Dizzy's on keyboards and Michael sings. We're in this tiny space and it is very rock and roll. It's a completely different thing for Michael. I hope he digs it.

GW What's the status of the Guns N' Roses/Metallica/Faith No More tour?

SLASH I feel bad for James Hetfield [*the Metallica guitarist suffered second-degree burns when a flash pot exploded near him onstage*]. I know he's bummed out because Metallica *never* cancels gigs. It figures that as soon as they get on tour with us, all hell breaks loose! All these cancelled shows aren't his fault, but he feels responsible. He's trying desperately to heal, and everyone is still committed to finishing the tour.

GW Did you ever second-guess your decision to follow Metallica onstage each night?

SLASH No. There's a certain kind of unpredictability about GN'R, as opposed to the rigidity of Metallica's whole trip. We could've never been the middle band, because it would've thrown Metallica way out of whack.

GW Doesn't it bother you that the audience is exhausted by the time you guys get to the middle of your set?

SLASH It was a compromise. We are aware the audience is pretty tired by the end of the night, but we've fought through that. But even though the crowd is tired, we've felt that the response has been warm and appreciative. Any other way would've been a disaster. We're trying to be a little more responsible with how we do things, because we know other people are involved; but still, with us, it's a firecracker situation.

GW Is the whole band responsible for the lateness, or just Axl?

SLASH I don't like to go onstage until I'm mentally and physically ready. However, I'll admit that three hours is pushing it.

We just feel the situation out. I don't know. In a way, we still feel like troubadours. We like to show up, have a good time, and play into the night without worrying about curfews and whatever. I feel like concert productions have become too rigid. It's turned into a formula, and we don't come from that side of the fence at all. I think we'd be fucking the audience more if we adhered to those rules, because we wouldn't be half the band onstage if we didn't do it our way. It's true that we've put our audiences through a lot of shit, but it's not that we don't care. Each show is a completely different trip for us, depending on our mental state. We try to approach each one as a unique event—almost like it was our last show. It's hard to regulate something like that. It's hard to say that it will start exactly at 9 P.M.

When we started going onstage late, the audiences initially wondered what the hell was going on. Then it became part of the event. They knew we would either play an incredibly long set, or maybe just eight songs and leave. Our shows have the potential to be rowdy or completely calm. People come prepared for anything—but they always know it's going to be real.

I can't fake it. Most musicians have a "show-must-go-on attitude," and I can hang with that to a certain extent, but I can't fake it. Once something negative happens with any of the members of the band, it's hard for me to get it out of my mind.

GW About 2,000 fans rioted after your August 8 show in Montreal. How did that happen?

SLASH I'm not sure. Every time we have one of these happy-go-lucky riots, we are the ones punished. It's really disappointing, because it's like, "Well, we just killed that town. We'll probably never get to play there again." You never set out to cause something like that. But people think we set out to provoke it. The power to cause something like that is impossible for me to even comprehend.

GW How conscious is Axl of his capacity for provoking audience response?

SLASH He's probably 10 times more aware of it than I am. I can hide behind the guitar because that's my thing. But I'll be sitting around with Axl after the show, and he'll alert me to particular things that happened during any given concert that I was oblivious to. He'll talk about how he used a particular hand movement to express an idea. I'll just be going, "Huh?" He's very aware of what he's doing, and of the whole sensational aspect of his persona. The only thing I think about is, Okay, the wah-wah pedal is here, my amp is there... I'm aware of the energy and the interaction with the crowd, but I don't really see anyone because my head is usually down. The people I look out for are the people onstage running around like madmen. I just try not to hit anyone.

I remember one time I was running from one side of the stage to the other, and I suddenly noticed Axl was running from the opposite direction and that I wasn't going to be able to get out of his way. I immediately went into a tuck and roll, and he jumped over top of me. And I didn't miss a note! It was cool.

GW Legend has it that W.C. Fields once fell down a whole flight of steps with a martini in his hand and didn't spill one drop.

SLASH Duff and I have this thing where we tell each other that it's okay to fall all over the place when you're drunk, as long as you don't spill your drink. [*laughs*] But falling down a flight of steps—now that's commendable!

GW It seems like wherever the band goes, disaster follows. Does that get tiring?

SLASH Sometimes it seems like Guns has had to deal with every possible obstacle throughout our career. Things that are so major that, in most cases, they would stop any other band in its tracks. But somehow we get through it. Those things are just tests, and every day there is a new one. You do what you have to do and just keep going. That's survival. It gets frustrating because you always wonder, Is there ever going to be a break? Is there ever going to be a cruise period?

But I really think we're blessed. Losing both Izzy and Steven [*Adler, former GN'R drummer*] were the biggest tests we could possibly face. Because we're such a tight family, losing two members was really traumatic—yet we somehow survived. That was the be-all, end-all obstacle. As Spinal Tap as it may seem, we are still real people, and it was incredibly personal.

Nothing phases me now—even this postponed tour with Metallica. It's just a period and we'll move on. The key is not to go crazy. Believe me, this situation is nothing compared to losing Izzy. That was heavy. That's why I'm not freaking out. I'm just bored to death and anxious to hit the road again.■

ROCK OF AGES

IN CELEBRATION OF APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY, SLASH RECALLS THE MAKING OF GUNS N' ROSES' LANDMARK ALBUM.

BY ROBERT CHERRY

Reprinted from *Guitar One*, June 2002

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTORESERVE

The Guns N' Roses legend is filled with as many cautionary tales as rock and roll victories. There's the time Duff McKagan's pancreas exploded from prolonged overindulgence. And the time Izzy Stradlin' was arrested for relieving himself in an airplane galley. And the time Axl Rose incited a stadium riot because an audience member took his photo. But for a guitarist, there's perhaps no story more gruesome and edifying than the one recently revealed by the band's longstanding producer, Mike Clink.

"When I first met the band, Slash was playing a Jackson guitar," he recalls. "It was December, and it was cold in the rehearsal room at Hollywood's S.I.R. Studios. And Slash hadn't changed his strings in I don't know how long. So I said, 'You know, your strings are dead.' And he said, 'Okay, I'll change them.' So he goes off into a corner, and he cuts off all the strings at once—and the neck just tweaked. And from that moment on, that guitar never went into tune ever again. It was pretty horrendous."

It's difficult to believe that Slash was then a mere two months away from recording one of the landmark rock albums of the past 15 years. But even incipient guitar heroes have to learn the ropes of guitar maintenance somehow—and Guns N' Roses always preferred to take their lessons from cold, hard experience rather than by example.

Fifteen years later, you can still hear that preference for often-brutal reality ripping from the speakers whenever you spin *Appetite for Destruction*. (And if you haven't treated yourself lately, hell, what are you waiting for?) It's not the sound of a guitarist who would patiently replace one string at a time—it's the sound of two guitarists, actually, who would rather do what it takes to get back to playing that much sooner.

Coincidentally, Slash and the band's underrated and unfortunately press-shy rhythm guitarist, Izzy Stradlin', were jamming together for the first time in years when we contacted Slash to reminisce about the making of *Appetite* some 15 years after the fact. Typically, Slash wasn't dwelling on past successes, but his reunion with Izzy had rekindled an appreciation for—and analysis of—the rare and exquisite chemistry that was captured on far too few albums.

In this exclusive interview, Slash jogs his memory about recording the first and best Guns album, and details where it all went right—and then very wrong.

GUITAR ONE Congratulations on *Appetite for Destruction*'s anniversary. Were you aware it had been 15 years?

SLASH It was brought to my attention yesterday. I hadn't been counting.

G1 Is it safe to say that *Appetite* is your favorite Guns album?

SLASH I love playing, recording and touring so much that each record has its own "whatever" about it. I had a blast making that record, but I just didn't realize how cool it was until way after the fact. When you make a record, it's really of-the-moment. After it's done, I never even listen to it again. I just enjoy the time that I'm in the studio. So really, the only reminder I have about any of the recordings is usually through somebody else.

G1 But it was your debut album. Didn't that make it special?

SLASH It was the first extended studio effort that we'd done collectively, so that in itself was a gas. At the same time, there was so much else going on—I was staying out till four in the morning, getting to the studio at least by noon. And I wasn't living anywhere, so I was a complete vagabond during the making of *Appetite*. There was a lot of craziness and partying going on—all of the stuff that comes with being a rock and roll band that has no idea where it's going. We did everything we wanted to do and got away with whatever it was we could get away with.

FRANK WHITE

So looking back on it now, it's like, yeah, that was totally cool; I wouldn't have missed a minute of it.

G1 Were there any templates you were holding up back then, saying, "If I could make an album like this, I'd be happy"?

SLASH No. Everyone else might have a different story, but I'm only speaking on my behalf. From the time the band started, it's always had a chemistry where everybody played what they thought needed to be incorporated into the music. The band had a very magical chemistry. I was thinking about this last night, because I was jamming with Izzy. Everybody always came up with their own ideas. Nobody really asked a lot of questions. We just had an unspoken chemistry—a natural feel for knowing where to put a part. There wasn't a lot of sitting around and looking to the future as far as how big a hit this was going to be. We just incorporated what we each liked as individuals into the songs. And it just happened; there was no discussion.

G1 Did the band feel unified at that point?

SLASH We were the only five guys who could have made up that band in the whole of L.A. Especially at that point in time; the Eighties was probably one of the worst decades of all time for music. [*laughs*]

G1 Which was similar to the current climate—disposable pop and cookie-cutter metal bands.

SLASH Exactly. We hated everything that was going on everywhere, so we ended up falling together. It was sort of a fluke how it happened, but it was inevitable because individually, we couldn't pair up with anyone else—we each had our own personal direction. We all eventually got together, and that was the only combination that worked. Against all odds, we went headlong into this thing. But it wasn't preconceived—that's just who we were. When we went in to do the album, we just wanted to make our album and to be good at what we did.

G1 But were you reacting against how plastic music had become?

SLASH No, it wasn't that. It was just that, given the time period, what we did was very much against the grain. And we enjoyed the static. [*laughs*]

G1 Your playing was more raw, melodic and bluesy than the fleet-fingered style that dominated the L.A. hair-metal scene back then. What were some of the reactions to your style?

SLASH I wasn't riding anybody's opinion. It wasn't until much later that I got recognized as a half-decent guitar player. But in the Hollywood scene, we were such a brash band that the whole thing was overwhelming. I just liked to play what I liked to play. As long as I thought I was playing well, I didn't really give a shit what anyone was thinking. But I've always been very paranoid about the quality of my playing. I'm one of those guys who always

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA (SLASH AND MAY); ROSS HALFIN (BUCKETHEAD)

The Hired Guns

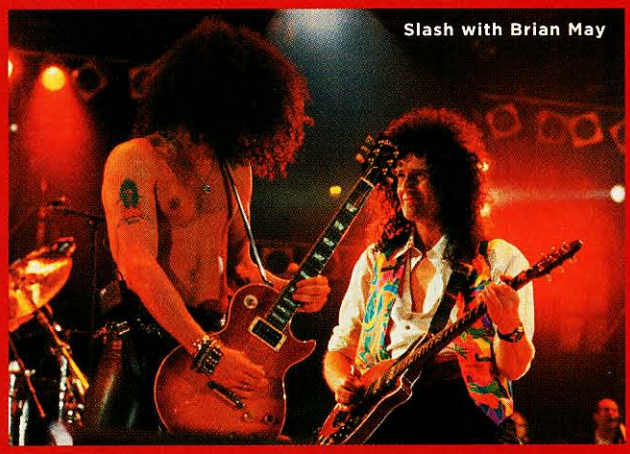
Slash wasn't the first GN'R gunslinger, and he certainly wasn't the last...

Tracii Guns

WHO IS HE? A big-haired L.A. scenester, and also cofounder of Guns N' Roses.

GLORY DAYS Tracii was the band's original lead guitarist and claims to have written many of the riffs that were later made famous by Slash. He was kicked out in 1985.

TRACII ON AXL "He's a schmuck and he'll always be a schmuck. End of story."



Slash with Brian May

Izzy Stradlin'

WHO IS HE? Known as being the "quiet one" despite once being arrested for pissing down the aisle of a crowded airplane.

GLORY DAYS Played rhythm guitar in the original, classic lineup. He left in 1991 after Axl forced him to accept a pay cut.

IZZY ON AXL "Axl always wants to do stuff his way, at his pace, in his time."

Zakk Wylde

WHO IS HE? Beer-swilling New Jersey ax-for-hire. Plays for Ozzy Osbourne as well as fronting his own project, Black Label Society.

GLORY DAYS Zakk jammed with the band in 1995. He'd barely tuned up when he got his marching orders.

ZAKK ON AXL "I saw Axl not so long ago...and I said, 'Get the fuck out of here.' "

Robin Finck

WHO IS HE? Nine Inch Nails guitarist poached by Axl on the strength of his cutting edge, industrial sound.

GLORY DAYS Replaced by Slash as lead guitarist between 1997 and 1999. Still occasionally turns up for live gigs.

ROBIN ON AXL "I doubt very much that record will come out any time soon."

Gilby Clarke

WHO IS HE? Eighties glam rock also-ran. Left L.A. band Candy to replace Stradlin' in GN'R.

GLORY DAYS Toured with the band from 1992 to 1994. After one pomp-rock ballad too many, Gilby politely suggested that the band might rock out a bit more...so Axl sacked him.

GILBY ON AXL "I don't really talk to the man much anymore."

Paul Huge

WHO IS HE? His surname is apparently pronounced 'hoogee.' Childhood friend of Axl's. Also named the "Yoko Ono of Guns N' Roses" by Matt Sorum.

GLORY DAYS Replaced Gilby Clarke in 1994. Slash couldn't stand him, and promptly quit. Huge, meanwhile, managed to cling on until last year.

PAUL ON AXL "We're still friends."

Dave Navarro

WHO IS HE? Formerly of Jane's Addiction and Red Hot Chili Peppers fame, the man's an exceptional guitarist.

GLORY DAYS Played a solo on "Oh My God" from the *End of Days* movie soundtrack back in 1999. One afternoon with Axl was quite enough for Dave.

DAVE ON AXL "It just never worked out."

Brian May

WHO IS HE? The fright-haired Eighties Queen legend. He wrote some tunes you might just recognize...

GLORY DAYS Played on early sessions for *Chinese Democracy* with Mr. Rose. Who knows, we might even get to hear some of the stuff he did one day!

BRIAN ON AXL "He's not always easy [to work with]. He's utterly meticulous."

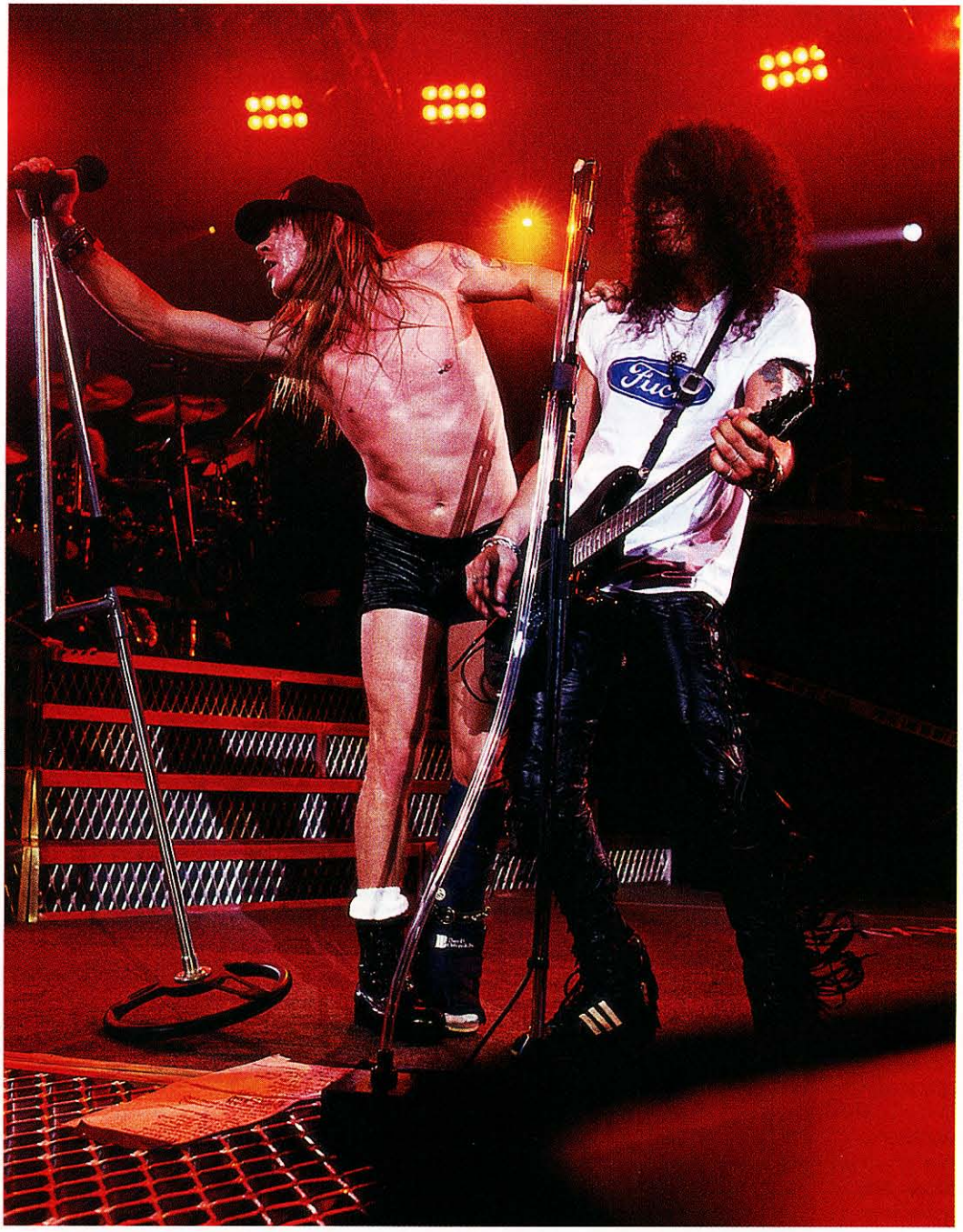
Buckethead

Buckethead

WHO IS HE? A mystery wrapped in an enigma topped off with a KFC bucket. What more could you ask for?! He used to be in avant-funk oddballs Praxis, and once auditioned for the Chili Peppers.

GLORY DAYS Joined in 2000 and left in 2003.

BUCKETHEAD ON AXL "..."



asks afterward, "Did I play okay?" But I wasn't judging my playing by anyone else's standards but my own. I didn't have any convoluted dreams about being a guitar hero.

G1 But you became one anyway.

SLASH There was a point when I started getting phone calls to do magazine interviews. And then at another level, me and Axl got the lead singer/lead guitarist combo thing going that was very recognizable. From that point on, I started to get recognized as a guitar player, which was very flattering. I appreciate the fact that I've done pretty well for myself in the context of being one fifth of a cool rock and roll band.

G1 How difficult was it to get the band's sound on tape?

SLASH Capturing it properly was a hard thing to do because it was very raw, and we didn't want to use a lot of effects and other stuff to embellish it too much. At the same time, we did have a certain amount of professional integrity, and we wanted it to sound tight. There are a lot of bands that try to sound unhinged. We were unhinged, but we also liked to tie it together enough to keep it from exploding all over the place. So it always had that sound where it was just about to fall apart, but it was a little tight at the same time.

G1 What was your daily routine like at that time?

SLASH My existence has always been that detached gypsy kind of thing—very focused around my music, but as far as everything else, very detached. So I'd work until 11 or 12 at night, and then hit the street, find a place to hang out, then find a place to sleep, and then find a way to get back to the studio the next morning. That was the making of the whole record.

G1 Would you indulge at all when you were recording?

SLASH There was a little of everything within reason [*laughs*], but it wasn't as excessive during the actual recording process, because as soon as you couldn't play well, then the whole point of being around ceased to exist. So in the studio, maybe a little Jack and coffee. [*laughs*] But after a day's work, it was go-for-broke. And then the next day, you just showed up at the studio on time, and no one had anything to say, as long as it didn't affect your performance.

G1 So where did it start to go wrong?

SLASH First there was Steven [*Adler, the band's first drummer, who was let go for excessive drug abuse*]. That was a big change, but we survived it. But that still had a big effect on the camaraderie of a bunch of guys who—I hate to sound cliché—really came from the gutter. But it was hard, because I was only 20 and Steven was only 21 when the band really started. We had professional ethics, but at the same time, we were a crazy bunch of kids. Trying to keep a tab on any one of us was difficult. [*laughs*] We just knew when we had to show up for work, but after work...God knows what was going on.

So when we buckled down to do *Use Your Illusion*, [*former Cult drummer*] Matt Sorum came in, and he was just like the rest of us, so that was cool. And then we're doing this whole double-record thing because we had so much material. And then we had all these huge shows coming up, so it's like we were touring during the making of the record. There was a lot going on. So we were out for two-plus years on those albums.

Then Izzy left, and a lot of that had to do with the excessive shit happening on the road, as far as going on late and riots

ROSS HALFIN

"THERE WAS A LOT OF CRAZINESS AND PARTYING GOING ON—ALL OF THE STUFF THAT COMES WITH BEING A ROCK AND ROLL BAND THAT HAS NO IDEA WHERE IT'S GOING."

and that kind of stuff. We were a really simple band from the start. We really looked forward to getting up and playing every night—that's what we're all about. But when that started to get complicated for reasons that didn't have anything to do with the rest of us, it put a strain on the band.

It wasn't a "success kills" kind of story, it was just that what Axl had originally planned all along started to become something that none of us knew anything about. [*laughs*] So when the tour was over, I looked at what was going on, and I realized I felt very estranged. What bound us together was really lacking as soon as we were missing a couple guys. You just can't reinvent something like that.

We tried to hang in there as long as possible, but Axl was going in a musical direction that none of us could fathom. Eventually, it just wasn't fun for me, and I finally left. And consequently Duff left, and Matt got fired. Now Axl is doing Guns on his own. I have no regrets about the whole thing, because it was a slow, systematic thing that went on. I'm just waiting for the new Guns album to come out so I can have something solid in my hands to explain where Axl was headed—just to clarify some things. [*laughs*]

G1 But musically, at least, something good came out of Axl's temperamental side.

SLASH Oh yeah. He's one of the most brilliant lyricists. He's got so much going on, and he's really an intelligent, amazing guy. It's just…it depends how much of that [emotional baggage] you want to experience with him. A lot of it is stuff that not everyone in the band necessarily understands. So you try to understand, and you try to be a good friend and bandmate as you go through it. But when it negatively affects everything the band is doing, it's really hard to stand by him.

I'm also interested to hear the new Guns record because so much has gone on since this whole thing started—I know he's got a lot to say. Even a lot of his stage performance is

GENE KIRKLAND/IDOLS (CLINK)

Appetite For Construction

An exclusive, behind-the-scenes look at the *Appetite* sessions with producer Mike Clink, Guns N' Roses' tonal architect.

"I absolutely love it. This is it. We start work right away." It was 4 A.M. when Mike Clink received a fateful phone call in the fall of 1986. The excited voice on the line belonged to Axl Rose, who had just heard a rough mix of "Shadow of Your Love," a track Guns N' Roses had demoed with the producer over the weekend. For months prior to that weekend, the band had achieved mediocre results with numerous other producers, including Kiss' Paul Stanley. Money and patience were growing thin. "A lot of people came along that we didn't like," says Slash. "And we scared off a lot of other producers. Basically, everyone who worked with us from the very beginning had a very distinctive personality."The band was initially attracted to Clink through his work on UFO's *Strangers in the Night*. But his skill at capturing a twin-guitar assault was only part of the equation that kept him behind the glass for Guns' essential disc. "They trusted me because I always told them how it was," he says. "That's the reason I stayed in that camp for so long: my brutal honesty." In this rare interview, Clink shares the brutal honesty involved in making *Appetite for Destruction*.

GUITAR ONE The band had a reputation for being difficult. Did you initially have reservations about working with them?

MIKE CLINK Absolutely not. I loved those guys. They were characters from the first day I met them. I went to S.I.R. Studios for a rehearsal, and they were telling me about themselves and asking me about some of the records I had worked on, and they were spitting over one another's heads. It was very strange to me, because those guys were living on the street, and that was a whole different mentality. But by the time the record was over, I understood it completely.

G1 So you would join in the fun.

CLINK Oh, absolutely. It was a lot of fun to go out with those guys. I couldn't do it every night, because I was making the record. But on occasion, I definitely went out. Those were some wild times.

The hardest part about recording Guns N' Roses was getting five guys to do the same thing at the same time.

G1 How would you describe the sound they were after?

CLINK They wanted it to be raw, and they enjoyed the interplay of two guitarists, which is something that I've always loved. They would also talk about the records they liked, especially Axl. Axl came to rehearsals with cassettes—he listened to music constantly, and one of the bands he loved was Metallica. And Izzy was a Dixie Dregs guy. Slash was a Rolling Stones guy. Duff was a Misfits-style punk guy. And Steven enjoyed all of the above.

G1 How many songs did you have to work with at the time?

CLINK A little over 20 tracks. After I became familiar with the tunes, we wrote down what we felt would comprise the best record. The one song that was a point of disagreement was "November Rain." It was an epic, but the rest of the band felt it wasn't right for the first Guns record—they wanted to keep it guitar-oriented. Obviously, Axl felt it was his finest moment, and it was, it's a great song. That was one of the tougher hurdles to get over on that record.

G1 What was the biggest obstacle once you got into the studio?

CLINK The hardest part about recording Guns N' Roses was getting five guys to do the same thing at the same time. They were extremely scattered, always wanting to do a thousand things at once or nothing at all. So just getting them in the studio

and focused and playing was difficult. Another thing I excelled at was knowing when the band had peaked and when it was time to back off. I innately knew when they had given their best performance.

G1 On average, how many takes would you need to get the basic tracks?

CLINK Some of them were quick, like five or six takes. And some we played as many as 10 times. But we never beat it into the ground. We were very well rehearsed by then.

G1 What would you shoot for on the basic tracks?

CLINK I come from the school of live performance, so I was going for as much as possible: drums, bass and Izzy's guitar. I didn't go for Slash's guitar, because he just didn't have a tone at that time.

G1 How did you capture the guitar sound?

CLINK I used two Shure SM57s, a Pultec EQ and the old-style dbx 160s for compression. Mostly it was just tweaking the amps. I would run out constantly to tweak the amps and move the mics around in the isolation booths. Both Izzy's and Slash's amps were close miked. I got the effect of the distance and spaciousness with a Roland SRV2000 reverb. I had six of them, and I used them for the guitars. That was a big part of the tone on the record. We used chorusing and Lexicon delay on some songs, and an octave divider on one song.

G1 So many albums from that era sound horribly dated. How did you achieve such a timeless sound?

CLINK I try to make every band sound like themselves. A trend in the Eighties was for a band to use all of the producer's gear. I wasn't afraid to use whatever was right to make it work. I mean, Carvins were not my favorite amp, but they worked for Izzy. When I finished that record, I was really proud of it. The amazing thing was, I had so many people come up to me and say, "This is the biggest piece of crap I've ever heard." And after it sold a million copies, those same people said, "I always loved that record."

G1 Did you have some sense at the time that you were creating a classic album?

CLINK We knew that what we were doing was right. It felt good the whole way through. I would put those rough mixes up, and they just sounded amazing. I don't think I knew it would become a classic. But [*Geffen A&R coordinator*] Tom Zutaut came out to Take One Studios toward the end of the sessions for a playback, and he said, "Mike, what do you think this record is going to sell?" I said, "This record is going to sell two million copies." And I felt good about that. And he said, "You're wrong. This is going to sell five million records." We were both wrong. [*laughs*]

G1 Do you still get people coming to you for that "Guns N' Roses sound"?

CLINK I've always had that. Being the producer of Guns N' Roses has been a blessing and a curse at the same time. Because that album was bigger than life. Everyone thinks that if I do a record with them, they're going to sound like Guns N' Roses. And I go, "Does your music sound like Guns N' Roses? If not, you really won't." It goes back to the fact that I try to make every band sound like themselves.

G1 What is it about your approach that allowed you to succeed with the band when so many had failed?

CLINK I can work around a problem. Usually when people are insecure about themselves it's because they're afraid to make a mistake. I make them feel comfortable. And through my experience, I know shortcuts to make things work more easily. And I like to have a good time. When it gets to be a painstaking job, then it's not fun for anybody. I want to be productive. Mostly, it's understanding the insecurities of a drummer, a guitarist and a singer. I get everybody feeling like they can conquer the world. —R.C.

I had so many people come up to me and say, "This is the biggest piece of crap I've ever heard."

"IT WAS US AGAINST THE WORLD. AND IT WAS A REALLY COOL TIME, BECAUSE WE PULLED IT OFF."

fueled by angst. And it's essential to have that sort of soul and energy for the music to come across as genuine; that's an integral part of rock and roll. But it just depends on how far you want to take it. It's like, if you can get it all out of your system in the two hours you're onstage, great—as long as you're onstage. [*laughs*]

G1 You've been jamming with Izzy again. Any new perspective on why your playing styles work so well together?

SLASH It's the kind of thing where no matter who comes up with the initial idea, I never really have to go, "Izzy, play this part this way." He just plays his thing his own way, and we never really talk about it much.

Last night, we went in and took two songs from scratch—just basic chord changes—and worked them into full songs. That's one of the things about me and Izzy working together—he knows where I'm at, and I know where he's at. And that's the way it's always been. I make up something that accompanies his part, and at the same time accents it, and he does the same with my parts. We have that kind of chemistry. We've always been good friends, so for us to get in a room and play is a very easy thing to do.

G1 And finally, what's the strongest impression you have of your time creating *Appetite for Destruction*?

SLASH You should probably ask the rental car companies who rented us the vans we used to drive from the Valley to Hollywood and back. [*laughs*] There were a few damaged vans—we must have dropped off about three or four in the middle of the night. So many rental places were pissed off and ready to sue—except there was no entity to sue, really. That's what that album was about—an appetite for destruction. It was us against the world. And it was a really cool time, because we pulled it off. ■

NEIL ZLOZOWER (ADLER); GENE KIRKLAND/IDOLS (CLINK)

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ROBERT KNIGHT/RETNA

SLASH & BURN

THE SOFT-SPOKEN GUITARIST OVERCOMES HIS HUMILITY TO OFFER INSIGHTS ON THE ART OF VIBRATO, AVOIDING "STANDARD ROCK LICKS" AND THE IMPORTANCE OF STRING MUTING.

BY WOLF MARSHALL

SLASH CLAIMS TO have no personal style as a guitarist. This despite the fact that on any given Saturday afternoon, his signature Guns N' Roses riffs and licks bounce off the walls of music stores around the globe.

Our guest teacher was at first more than a little reluctant to do this lesson; his technical skills and grasp of theory, he believed, were not sufficient. Once the guitar was in his hands for a few minutes, however, his reluctance gave way to enthusiasm. Slash offered valuable insights about his personal solo techniques and concepts, as well as rock guitar fundamentals and rhythm approaches in general.

We launched our exploration of Slash's guitar style with a look at his *vibrato* technique—a personal signature that defines most rock guitarists' individual sound as distinctly as a fingerprint.

"To me, vibrato is basically a moving bend, but not going as far," he explained. "The hand sits the same way, but the physical action is

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different. I pull down sometimes, push up sometimes, and move back and forth other times. The technique is about conveying emotions—execution is on an emotional level. I think it's very important to make vibrato lock into the song's groove, in terms of tempo and feel."

Slash fashioned a simple, gutsy lick to illustrate his point (**FIGURE 1**). Played entirely on the B string, the lick is an absolutely definitive demonstration of rock guitar vibrato and string bending. Notice the blues-based, Clapton-esque, anchored hand position and the dominant use of the ring finger for fretting. The thumb hooks over the top side of the fretboard and anchors the wrist, which actually does most of the oscillation during the vibrato. Other fingers execute the phrase: the index finger mutes the G and high E strings around the vibrato-ed B string (right-hand *palm muting* silences the bass strings), and the middle finger helps the ring finger bend the string. (This important technique is known as *reinforced fingering*).

"Another thing I like to do is catch other strings with my fretting finger when bending and use the resulting string noise musically," says Slash, referring to bar 3 of **FIGURE 1**. "It's aggressive. You hear this a lot in my playing." In this case Slash simultaneously bends and applies vibrato to both the B and G strings. "If I'm playing on the low strings, I'll definitely pull them down for vibrato," he points out.

FIGURE 2, a signature Slash lick, features a funky, rhythmic feel, varied palm muting (indicated by the abbreviation P.M.) and a *chromatic passing tone* (F#, sixth string, second fret). "I like to bend and shake chords too," he says. "For example, in this case I'm taking the C5 chord and yanking the strings in toward my palm with my first and fourth fingers. I do a similar thing in the 'Paradise City' riff when we're playing live."

"I LIKE TO CATCH OTHER STRINGS WITH MY FRETTING FINGER WHEN BENDING AND USE THE RESULTING STRING NOISE MUSICALLLY."

Slash is quick to point out that he never gets bogged down with technique to the point where he allows it to intrude on his music: "I don't practice technique because it's virtually impossible for me to sit around the house and practice at all. But I *play* all the time. When I'm in town, I go out and jam to keep my chops up—mostly blues, I-IV-V things, James Brown stuff, old r&b. I'm always playing, but whatever I play has to be a song with a groove, to which I can apply the right kind of riff and solo. I'm kind of single-minded that way."

So how does one cop a groove with the potential for the "right kind of riff and solo?" According to Slash, it starts with rhythm. "I always concentrate on *rhythm* and *groove* to get my right hand going. I might start with something like this" [**FIGURE 3**]. Slash strums a heavily-accented funk-based IV-I chord progression (F7-C7) in a 16th-note rhythm, embellishing the sparsely voiced changes with sliding notes, *double-stops* (two-note chords) and a consistent, scratchy r&b feel, interspersing fret-hand-muted notes (indicated by x's) among the fretted chords. (He does this simply by relaxing his grip on the chord shapes without actually lifting his fingers off the strings.)

When playing the F7 chord in this figure, Slash also uses fret-hand muting to keep the idle strings silent as he strums. The sixth string is "choked" by light contact with the tip of the middle finger, while the top two strings are muted by the fleshy underside of the index finger.

Slash next illustrated a fill he often plays over a C7 chord. Playing around with the shapes depicted in **FIGURE 4**, he created a tasty fill consisting of seventh chords and bluesy, descending-sixth double-stops. Again

FIGURE 1

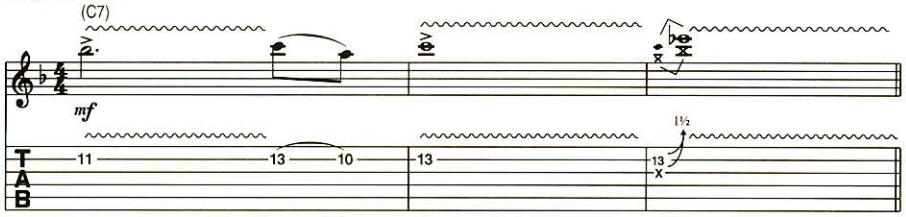


FIGURE 2

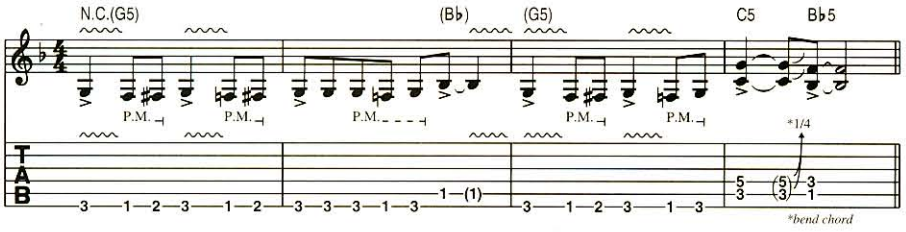
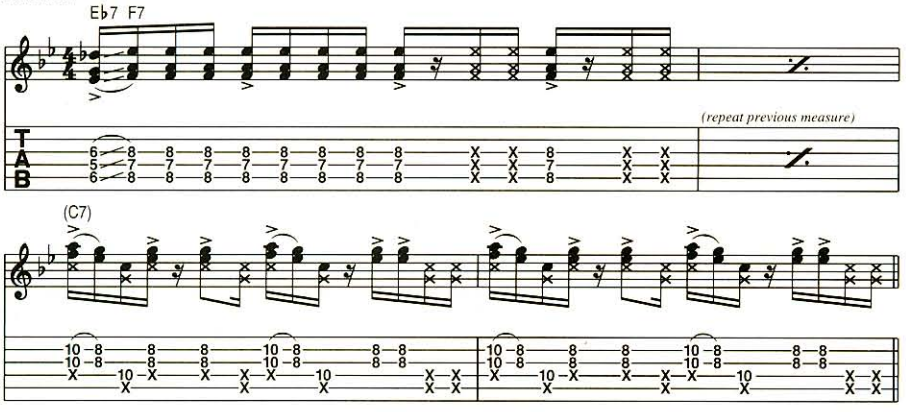


FIGURE 3



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

notice the all-important fret-hand muting. In this case, the fretting hand mutes the idle G string during the second half of the first bar.

"To put a lead on top of that, I'd probably mess around with something like this," Slash continues, playing **FIGURE 5**, a classic C minor pentatonic blues lick. "This is a variation of the first rock lick I ever learned. It's so standard—the number one all-time standard rock lick—but it always works. I use some form of it all the time, and I like to repeat it to get an energy flowing. This is my favorite position [**FIGURE 6**]. C is my favorite key. It puts this shape in the center of the neck [*eighth position*] and, using related notes, I can go high enough [*to the 20th position*] around the lick to build a solo the way I like. There are a million things to do in this area—it's one of those spots on the fingerboard that just seem so fluid. You can be moving along and just land there, and it feels good. You can just sit there and milk two notes, or you can really rip in it! The possibilities are endless.

"To escape from the confines of 'standard rock licks,' I'll often add chromatic passing tones. For instance, I could take anything from here [*plays a C chromatic scale: C C# D D# E F F# G G# A A# B*] and add it to the lick. There are lots of different passing tones that work in this position." Some of these tones are illustrated in **FIGURE 7**. Slash demonstrates what he's talking about here by playing **FIGURE 8**, a C minor pentatonic line with the added ninth (D). "B to C is real strong too," he adds, offering **FIGURE 9** as an example. "I think F# sounds good in the middle of a ripping lick." [**FIGURE 10**] The F# (or Gb) *blue note* (G string, 11th fret) is used as a true passing tone in **FIGURE 10**, chromatically connecting the G and F notes. "They're everywhere on the neck!" Slash says.

FIGURE 11 is another example of a passing tone used in a characteristic Slash phrase. The lick is similar to one heard in the "Sweet Child O' Mine" solo—an improvised variation that succinctly demonstrates the concept. Here Slash adds the notes F#, D# and C to what is essentially an E minor pentatonic (E G A B D) lick. "I think of these sounds as 'classical,'" says Slash as he trills between F# and G on the high E string, then between C and B on the B string. They also sound Jimmy Page–ish to me—scale-oriented. I use stuff like this on 'Back Off Bitch' and 'Don't Damn Me'." [*Use Your Illusion*]

Slash summed up his approach to guitar with this thought: "The most important thing is to play the way you feel. Just go with whatever emotion and music come to you. If you hear more notes, play more notes; if you hear fewer notes, play less. If you hear some 'out notes' in a song, fit them in—they may just be the magic notes! A producer might say, 'That's out of key!' It may just be out of key—or in the key of Z somewhere—but if it's in the emotion, go with it." ■

FIGURE 4

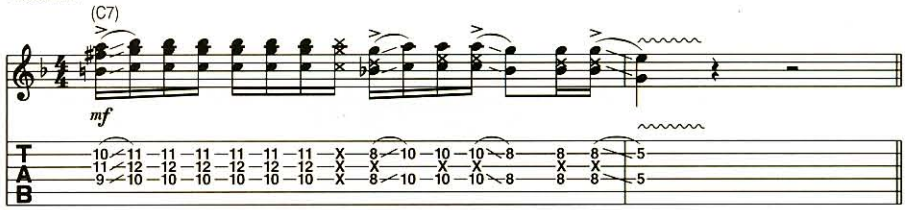
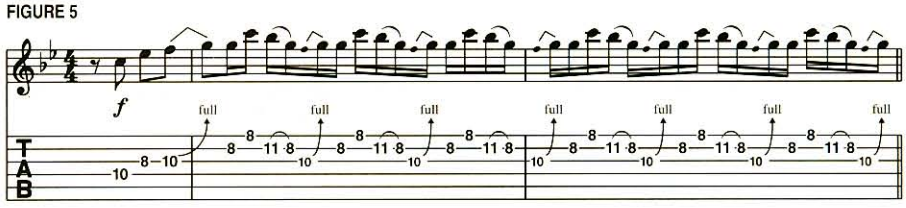


FIGURE 5



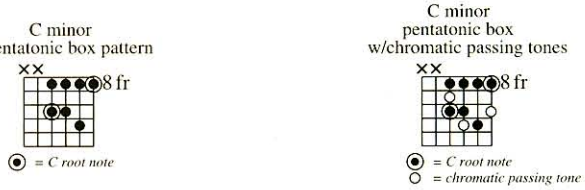
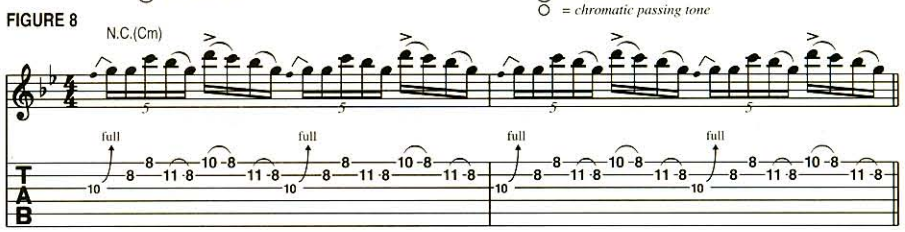


FIGURE 8



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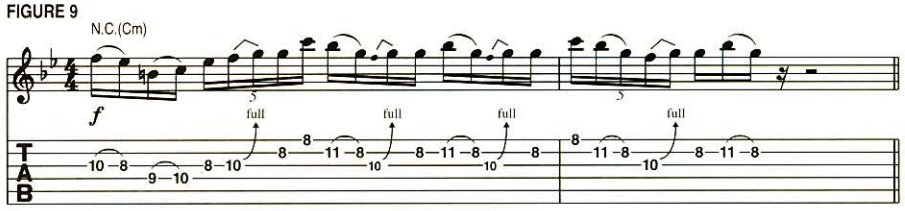


FIGURE 10

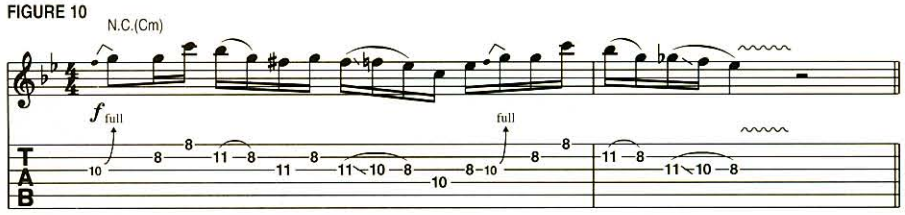
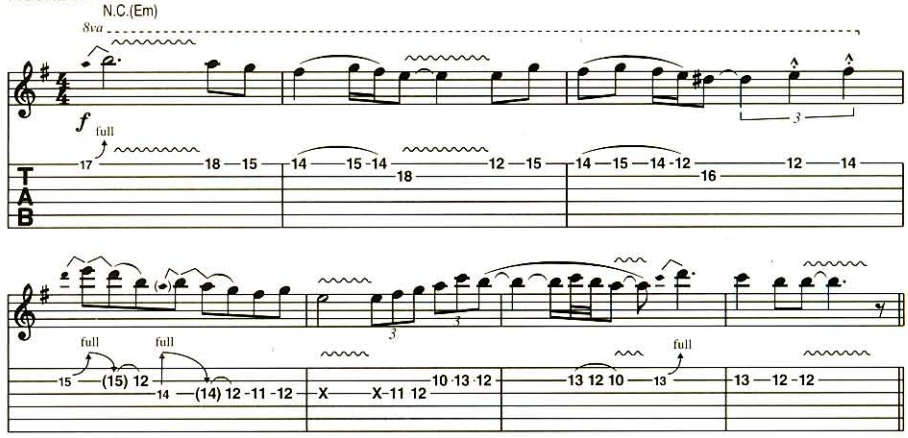


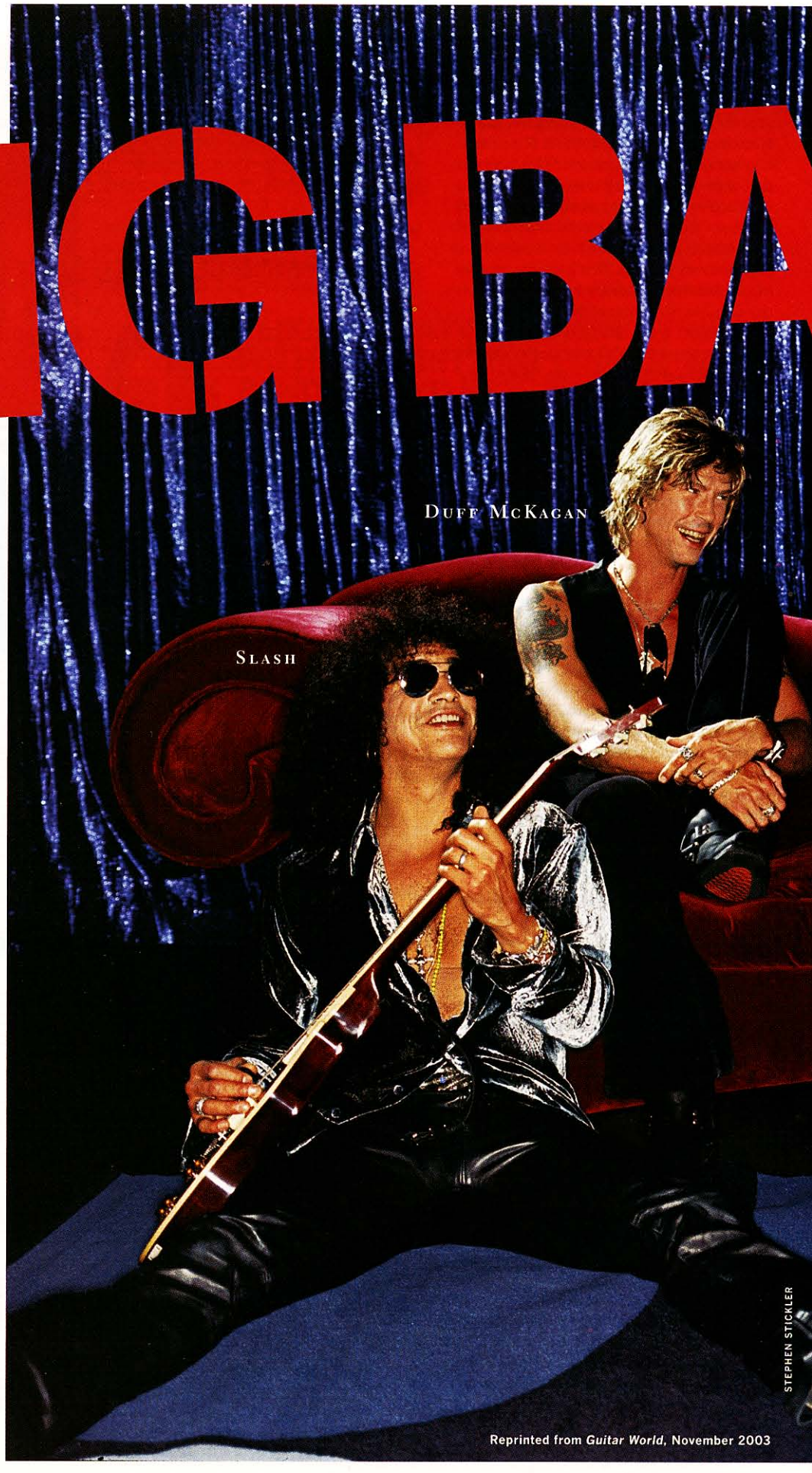
FIGURE 11



THE BIG BA

THE WILD AND TRUE HOLLYWOOD STORY OF HOW EX-GUNS N' ROSES MEMBERS SLASH, DUFF AND MATT REPLACED THEIR BROKEN AXL WITH STP'S SCOTT WEILAND AND CREATED THE EXPLOSIVE VELVET REVOLVER

BY DAN EPSTEIN



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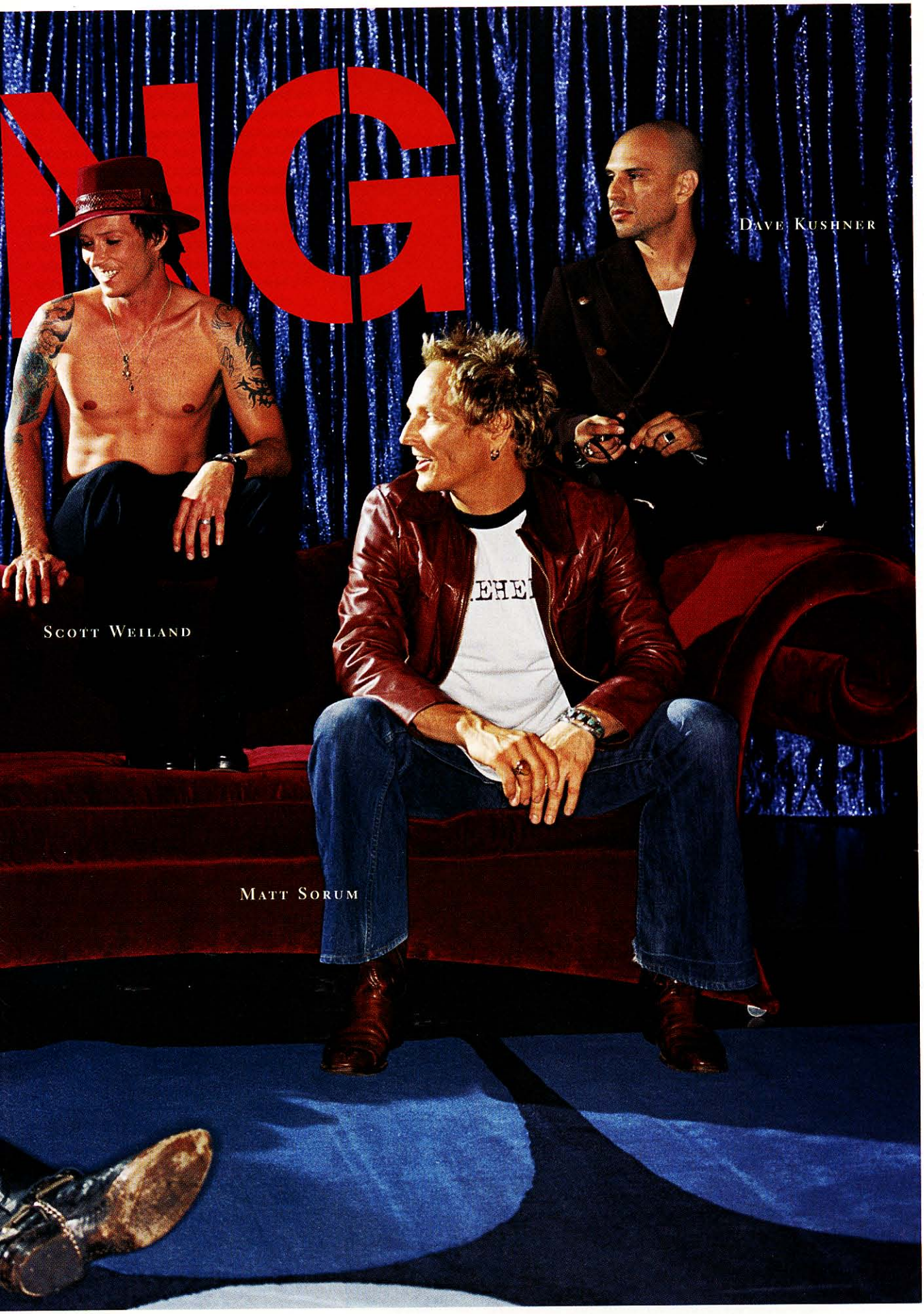

NG
Dave Kushner
Scott Weiland
Matt Sorum

IT'S

IT'S ANOTHER UNSEASONABLY HOT SUMMER DAY IN in Burbank, California. But inside a small rehearsal and recording studio on the city's industrial outskirts, five musicians are staying remarkably cool, even as they rack their brains to remember how to play a new song they're practicing. "I think we missed the second bridge," shrugs guitarist Slash, as bassist Duff McKagan and drummer Matt Sorum nod in agreement. › "Maybe we should go in and listen to it one time," Sorum suggests. › "I think I was playing the wrong song for part of that," McKagan says with a laugh as he heads into the control room. "We've been so busy writing songs," he explains, "that we haven't had a chance to really get them down." › Back in the early Nineties, Slash, McKagan and Sorum comprised three-fifths of Guns N' Roses. Together, they still clearly possess the kinetic chemistry that once made that band such a major rock force to be reckoned with. But today's rehearsal session has nothing to do with rehashing past glories. Instead, it's all about Velvet Revolver.

For nearly a year and a half now, the internet has been crackling with talk of Slash, McKagan and Sorum's new band. Variously dubbed the Project and Reloaded, the group had been rumored at times to feature such disparate luminaries as original Guns guitarist Izzy Stradlin, former Skid Row vocalist Sebastian Bach, Days of the New frontman Travis Meeks and Buckcherry singer Josh Todd. But this past June 19, the official Velvet Revolver lineup of Slash, McKagan, Sorum, guitarist Dave Kushner and Stone Temple Pilots singer Scott Weiland was unveiled to the world with a press conference and a six-song performance at Los Angeles' El Rey Theater. The show was a success, but nagging questions lingered: Were Velvet Revolver for real or just a bloated "supergroup" put together to revive a few faded careers and make some cash? Given Weiland's recurring drug and legal problems, could anyone be sure that this project would even get out of the starting gate? Would "Set Me Free," the hard-driving song they wrote for the *Hulk* soundtrack CD, be both the first and last recorded example of original Velvet Revolver material?

STEPHEN STICKLER

But on this sweltering Burbank afternoon, such questions seem utterly irrelevant. Weiland, looking healthier than he has in ages, wraps his angular frame around the microphone stand and leads the band through "Headspace," a song that seems to combine the freight- train velocity of GN'R's "Paradise City" with the effervescent vocal hooks of STP's "Big Bang Baby"—a radio hit in a perfect world, and maybe this one as well. When that song slams to a close, Weiland relinquishes the mic and perches himself on a nearby road case, listening intently while the other four work their way through something with the provisional title of "Rock Song." The number begins with a jangly, atmospheric buildup that leads into fiery, Zeppelin-esque riffing. "I don't normally say things like this," Weiland pipes up during one pause in the action, "but you guys should extend that intro. I think I can definitely do something with that."

THIS IS HOW it's been all summer for Velvet Revolver. No egos, no entourages, no rock star decadence—everyone other than Slash is presently sober, and even he has pretty much been on his best behavior—just intense rehearsals five days a week and an ever-expanding repertoire of riffs and songs. "So much of the stuff has been written on the spot," Sorum explains. "It's like, Duff will play some bass thing and I'll start kicking a groove, and before you know it, it starts turning into something. Then we'll give it to Scott. If it inspires him, he'll do his thing with it in Pro Tools, and he'll come back and say, 'Look!' And then we'll put it away and start working on something else."

It appears to be an ideal creative situation, which is pretty ironic, considering how often both Guns N' Roses and Stone Temple Pilots foundered on the rocks of terminal dysfunction. "This particular thing has been a true expression of dedication; it was so fuckin' against all odds, and we just did it," Slash says enthusiastically. "It's amazing to be sitting here talking about it in the past tense—all the auditioning, all the writing, all the naysayers, all the Guns N' Roses comparisons…"

Unflattering comparisons between Slash's post-Guns projects (Snakepit, Slash's Blues Ball) and his old band have dogged the

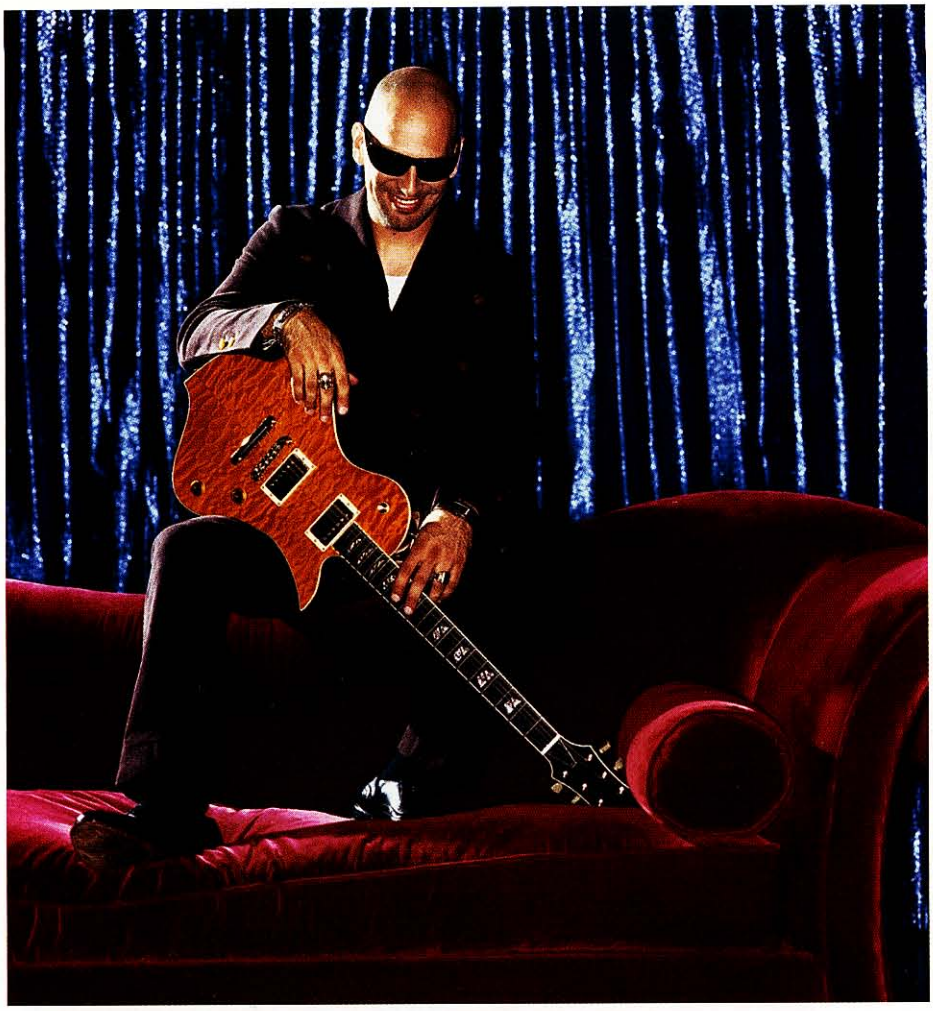
guitarist since he left Guns N' Roses in 1996; so, too, have incessant rumors of a Guns N' Roses reunion. In 1990, original drummer Steven Adler was the first to go (booted out when his heroin addiction got in the way of his playing), and original rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin' left soon after, unable to deal with the increasingly imperious behavior of lead singer Axl Rose. But with the departure of Slash—whose hot-rodded blues-metal licks were as much a part of GN'R's sonic imprint as Axl's feral yowl—it seemed like the true essence of the band had been lost forever. Slash, for his part, seemed pretty lost as well.

"It's hard for me to quit anything, and it was a moment of truth when I finally decided, 'I *cannot* do this!' " he remembers. "I can come up with two million ways to try and make something work, and I just fucking had to go. With Snakepit, that was just to get out of the situation that I was in; something fun to do, without, like, all the bullshit. It became one of those things where, every time I did it, I would just hook up with different people, and I found that finding the right combination of guys is not easy. I love working with people; I love going to other people's sessions or writing something with somebody, or jamming live with people I've never played with before. But when you're doing a band, you need the right chemistry, and I think I had to learn that.

"The last incarnation of Snakepit was just a huge mess; as much as I liked it, I was all fucked up—I almost killed myself drinking too much—and I had a lot going on. And I did this record [*2000's* Ain't Life Grand] with a bunch of guys who'd never been around the block before. For me, it was like revisiting what it was like to go out and start your first band; for them, it *was* their first band! One was strung out, blah blah blah; we were always getting guys out of jail for stupid shit." He laughs. "It had its moments, but it was like, John Lennon had his lost fuckin' summer, right? For me, it was like my lost four or five years!"

When Snakepit finally curled up and died, Slash decided to go back to square one, trying once again to put together a band with the same elusive chemistry that had sparked the original Guns N' Roses. Fate intervened in 2002, when drummer Randy Castillo, who'd played with Ozzy Osbourne and Mötley Crüe, died of cancer. A memorial concert to raise money for Castillo's family was scheduled for April 29, 2002, at L.A.'s Key Club, with many of Randy's old musical pals on the bill.

"I got a phone call from Matt," Slash recalls. " 'You wanna go jam at this thing?' " The pair dialed McKagan in Seattle and enlisted his services, then roped in Buckcherry's Josh Todd and Keith Nelson to complete what looked like a purely one-off collaboration. At the concert, the quintet (billed as Cherry Roses) ripped through Guns N' Roses classics "Paradise City" and "It's So Easy" and jammed with Steven Tyler of Aerosmith on "Mama Kin." The response was electric, and Slash immediately felt a regained sense of purpose. "The chemistry that I have with Duff is not something you can emulate," he says. "I didn't have any intention of getting this whole thing rolling, but the day after the gig, Duff and I talked on the phone and were like, 'Maybe we should do this!' "



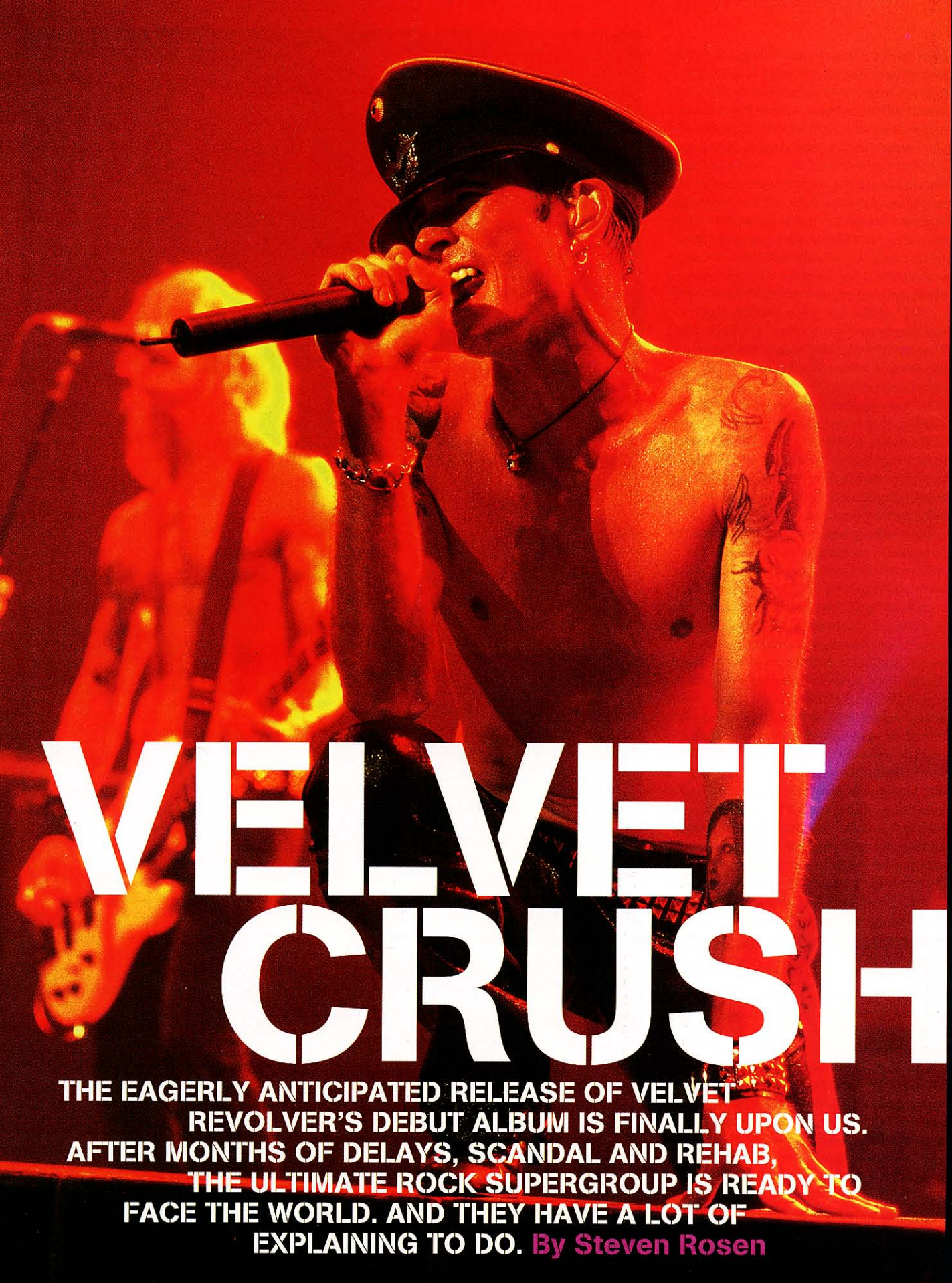
STEPHEN STICKLER

"THE LAST INCARNATION OF SNAKEPIT WAS JUST A HUGE MESS; AS MUCH AS I LIKED IT, I WAS ALL FUCKED UP—I ALMOST KILLED MYSELF DRINKING TOO MUCH—AND I HAD A LOT GOING ON."—SLASH

Of Velvet Revolver's members, Duff McKagan seems to have had the least interest in returning to the rock and roll wars. Newly remarried and happily resettled in his hometown of Seattle, McKagan was in his third year at Seattle University when Slash and Sorum asked him to play the Castillo benefit. "I was really serious about getting my finance degree, with a minor in accounting," he explains. "I was fully going toward that. I still had my band, Loaded, because I can't stop playing music, you know? On spring break or winter break we'd go and play Europe or something. But I really got into school and the field that I was getting my degree in. And this changed everything, you know?"

McKagan convinced Seattle University to let him complete his degree online, and almost before you could say "Welcome to the Jungle," he relocated to Hollywood and began writing songs with Slash, Sorum, Nelson and Todd. But within a matter of months, the Buckcherry guys were gone. Perhaps "musical differences" reared their ugly head, or maybe the fact that Buckcherry were generally perceived as a poor-man's Guns N' Roses imbued the whole enterprise with something of a not-so-fresh feeling. "The initial thing with the guys from Buckcherry would have been a completely different band," Sorum admits. "No disrespect to Josh—I mean, what he does is cool—but I think that particular style or direction we were going in might have not been taken as seriously as what we're doing now. I think what we're doing now just has so much more substance."

Being taken seriously *(continued on page 95)*



VELVET CRUSH

THE EAGERLY ANTICIPATED RELEASE OF VELVET REVOLVER'S DEBUT ALBUM IS FINALLY UPON US. AFTER MONTHS OF DELAYS, SCANDAL AND REHAB, THE ULTIMATE ROCK SUPERGROUP IS READY TO FACE THE WORLD. AND THEY HAVE A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO. By Steven Rosen

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSS HALFIN

FINALLY, AFTER ALL THE hoopla, drama, relapses and false starts, Velvet Revolver is here. Comprising Slash, Duff McKagan and Matt Sorum from Guns N' Roses, Stone Temple Pilots' Scott Weiland and Dave Kushner, this could be the superband everyone's been waiting for.

But the band's inception and growth hasn't been without its troubles. Number one on the list is Weiland's frequent brushes with the law. Possessing heroin, domestic violence and drunk driving have led to him having to undergo a six-month rehabilitation program, which has delayed the release of the album, although the rest of the band have been very supportive, acknowledging the fact they've all been there. But the debut album, *Contraband*, is finally complete, and we're on the cusp of its release. We catch up with four fifths of the band, as Weiland was otherwise engaged.

Reprinted from *Total Guitar*, April 2004

A day before our interview, at an exclusive listening party to let us hear *Contraband*, a record company mouthpiece announced this was an 'important' record. He may be right. The record industry has been searching for some time for a band to resurrect flagging sales. Velvet Revolver may be just what they're looking for. The album is suffused with muscular guitar riffs and the bluesy undertones that was a Guns N' Roses staple. But produced by Limp Bizkit and Staind technician Josh Abraham and mixed by Nirvana and Linkin Park figurehead Andy Wallace, this is not a retro record—in ex–Stone Temple Pilots vocalist Scott Weiland they have managed to infuse modernity, a hip ripple, into the Big Rock format.

TOTAL GUITAR *Contraband* echoes that raucous, running-off-the-rails style of guitar that defined Guns N' Roses, yet at the same time it has a contemporary feel. It's like a bridge linking the old to the new. There's also a new texture in your playing, a wrinkle showcasing a bigger sound.

SLASH The album is pretty aggressive, which I guess comes from all of us getting together. I'm very passionate about it. As far as the writing was concerned, everything was very spontaneous, and it went on the record that way. By the time we picked which songs we were gonna do, there was only a couple of months before we did the album. It's all first-take stuff.

TG Was there a different dynamic to how you felt playing guitar behind Axl?

SLASH Every time you play with someone different, you get a different energy, although there was obviously an underlying familiar core for me, Duff and Matt. I love playing with different people, I always have, but at the same time there's a certain vibe I prefer playing with, which I don't find with everyone.

Guns N' Roses was way cool when it was in its proper environment, it was killer, but then it went through a lot of crazy changes. Snakepit was just an outlet for me. It was good timing too, because I think everybody was trying to avoid any sort of combination of the Guns members, we just wanted to get away from that whole thing.

TG Now you play with Dave. What do you look for in a second guitarist?

SLASH In the same way that Izzy [*Stradlin', GN'R second guitarist*] did his own thing, so does Dave. As long as he's got his own thing together, I don't worry about what the other guy's doing and I can concentrate on myself. It's like I had a hard time working with the guitarists in the two Snakepit bands, because those guys were so aware of what I was doing it made me self-conscious.

Dave also doesn't feel threatened by me telling him what to do, and vice versa. I mean, it's not like we're a two-guitar band where we do harmonies. With Izzy it was the same; very rarely did we sit down and have the patience to work out guitar parts. Instead, we just sort of improvised. Dave and Izzy are the only two guitar players I really mesh with.

TG What was your approach to this project?

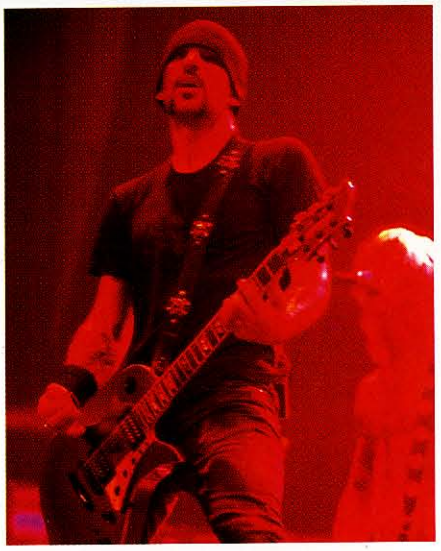
SLASH When we started working on jams, I started being more uninhibited about what sound I was going for. I usually think, If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' but that become boring. Especially when everybody around me is tripping out on this and that. Now I'm sort of a fuckin' unpacked suitcase.

TG Did this mean moving away from using the classic Les Paul and Marshall combo?

SLASH That's always been the underlying theme, but I've started using different Fender amps. I used a combination of three different Marshall heads and the AC30, which we toggled between. In a couple instances, I'd use a Marshall head and the AC30, then a combination of two or three heads. We re-recorded one of the songs, "You Got No Right," with my live head, which I'd never actually recorded with. It's the Slash model Marshall.

This is the most interesting fuckin' record

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSS HALFIN



"EVERYBODY THOUGHT THIS BAND WAS A COMPLETE FAILURE WAITING TO HAPPEN. NOW THAT WE'VE DONE IT, IT'S A HUGE FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. IT REMINDS ME OF THE OLD DAYS."—SLASH

I've done, yet it's the one I've paid the least attention to as far as gear's concerned. I even switched guitars around, which I don't normally do. My regular recording guitar is a Standard, handmade Les Paul copy, which I've had since *Appetite*. There's a guy who made an amazing '59 copy that's better than anything Gibson can make. Unfortunately, he's no longer alive. But I have two of those, and they're my main guitars.

I also have a couple of other reissues, but I didn't pull out any vintage guitars except a '53/'54 Les Paul. I used it for the beginning of "Fall to Pieces," that clean guitar sound, and for the bridge in "You Got No Right." I also used a Strat and a Tele for a couple sections.

There's a song called "Sucker Train Blues" where all the rhythms are done with a '56 Tele. I have three old Strats and I used one [*a 1965 Fender*] for the solo. Although I think they're the best sounding guitars, Strats are so inconsistent and I don't have the patience to mess with them. That's the reason I tend not to use them.

TG Talk us through the construction of a track. For instance, on "Slither," do you double your rhythms to create that wall of sound?

SLASH No, I don't believe in using that kind of stuff. That's one thing about having two guitarists, you can do it without faking it.

DAVE KUSHNER When I went in the studio, Slash had already done his rhythm parts, his solos, which was great because I could then go my own way with it, fill up the holes. In the intro, there's this wall of wah-wah and delay, I used the Line 6 Delay and right where it stops before the verse there's this trail-off and that's the Line 6 Delay. Halfway through the verses you can hear it thicken up. I used a Hyper Fuzz pedal straight into the board, not through an amp, to double my rhythms and in the breakdowns it's like a wah and delay.

DUFF McKAGAN We're all playing the same riff in that, too, the verse riff. That's three fat instruments playing the same thing.

SLASH For the most part there was a lot of quick experimenting going on. Very rarely did we pick up something and go, "That doesn't sound right." But for the most part it's just my recording Les Paul. All the heavy stuff, with the exception of "Sucker Train Blues," is basically my Les Paul copy, a Marshall and maybe the AC30.

TG How would you compare yourself to today's rock scene, against, say, Linkin Park and Korn?

McKAGAN Musically, these guys aren't pure rock bands. There's a lot of synth. We're a fuckin' rock band and there's no comparison between Limp Bizkit or Korn and us. We're straight up fuckin' rock.

SLASH A lot of the new stuff is pretty interesting, but they're not influenced by the same music we are, like the Faces. All things considered, we have a different sound going on than what's coming out right now. But it's still,

Revolver Sounds

Guitar tech Adam Day reveals the secrets behind the band's stash.

THE CALIBER of Adam Day is unquestionable. He's been Slash's main guitar guru for over 16 years, and worked with George Lynch before that. Now he's working with the Velvet Revolver guys, and he knows better than anyone what they're picking, stomping on and playing through.

At Lavish, Scott Weiland's rehearsal facility, Day cut all the pre-production demos on a Midas recording console dumped straight to CD. These stereo tracks were downloaded to Pro Tools to allow Weiland the luxury of writing lyrics, melodies and singing in the control room.

Slash's main rhythm sound was the combination of three Marshall heads: the Slash Signature Series model, a JC800 with 65/60 output tubes, and a 1973 1987 four-input, non-master volume top. This mix was fed in a Marshall 100-watt cabinet fixed with 25-watt Celestion Greenbacks. Added to this was the sonic characteristic of a Vox AC-30.

Clean rhythm sounds were created with a 1956 Les Paul plugged into this Vox amp, which also employed Celestion Greenbacks.

Before, the amps used to be screaming but during the recording of the *Use Your Illusion* albums, Slash switched to an old JCM 800 with 65/50 output tubes and set the preamp on 2, the master output on 8 and linked this to a Marshall 100-watt cab. The result was essentially all output distortion and output gain. This was a different sound to what was normally associated with the guitarist, and subsequently the Slash model was added during the Snakepit era. All guitar overdubs were cut directly to Pro Tools at Pulse, Josh Abraham's studio.

Velvet Revolver co-produced alongside Abraham, but Josh got them in tune and kept them in time. Ryan Williams, Josh's engineer, also proved to be very guitar knowledgeable.

Slash was initially uneasy with the working environment. Ultimately, the studio was set up to his liking and at that point all cabinets were recorded with Shure SM57s. There was an absence of room mics and some of the overdubs did employ a dash of Poltec EQ as the parts went to Pro Tools.

Live, all the rigs are bigger and louder. Slash's sound is the compromise of six Marshall heads: two Slash Signature 25/55 tops are used for a dirty sound feeding two Marshall 4x12 cabs on the back line, and an additional pair of Marshalls modified with KT 88 output tubes provide clean tones. These run through to cabinets—one top will power a Heil talkbox, and the final unit acts as a roaming spare.

All cabs are straight Marshall 1960-styled boxes fitted with Vintage 30 speakers. While the guitarist has experimented with different bottoms and speakers, this is the setup to which he always returns.

While he will bring out an array of guitars, Slash's main instrument is the new Gibson Signature Series model recently unveiled at the NAMM gear show. The finish is aged tobacco and is a replica of a 1959 model with a standard neck (falling somewhere between a Sixties-style profile and a 1959 Les Paul). It's customized with a Fishman power bridge and a Piezo pickup, with mini toggle switches to shuttle back and forth between the Piezo and magnetic pickups. This is plugged in DI. He may bring out a couple of these along with reissue Les Pauls. In addition, he'll shoulder a pair of custom B.C. Rich guitars: a Bitch with all the 10-string appointments but set up for six-strings, and a Mockingbird.

Slash, along with Guild, designed a double neck that will probably find its way onstage. This is configured with an acoustic neck on top (with Piezos) and a normal six-string neck on the bottom. This is a solid body guitar with humbuckers. All acoustic parts will be performed with this instrument.

Pedals run through the dirty amp effects loop and will include an MXR 10-band graphic EQ and a Boss DDS digital delay. The latter is kicked in for soloing and, in addition, the EQ is set to provide midrange boost to enhance feedback and provide a boost for leads. In the line, these come after the wireless and before the main rig.

A custom shop remote Dunlop wah system will be the sole pedal upstate that Slash operates himself. This enables him to run up to four pedals at various locations on the stage. Adam typically does all switching offstage, between dirty, clean and voice box necessities.

Dave uses Fernandes guitars and an array of pedals. All pedals run pre amplifier, and there's nothing in the actual effects loop, except a Ketner Rotosphere for Leslie effects. They are currently working on a Ground Control switching system enabling Kushner to put the existing effects in a rack drawer and giving him the ability to use more than one effect programmed into one footswitch.

Marshall
Marshall

I hate to say it, new sounding at the same time.

TG When did the music really take on a definite form?

SLASH When Scott joined the group, somehow we knew who we were writing for. Every singer brings something different to the music. I learned a long time ago that, chances are, a good singer will come up with a better idea than me, unless I want a really strong melody to come across.

There's an interesting chord change on the song "You Got No Right," and it sounded really simplistic but interesting when I first wrote it. I heard something very dramatic in my head. We recorded the idea but didn't do anything with it for months. Then we put it together and gave it to Scott—and he wrote this amazing vocal for it. I wouldn't have come up with anything like that. That's one of the great things about being in a band—we all have our own ideas.

TG Did you know you wanted Matt and Duff beside you as a rhythm section?

SLASH No, this project came out of nowhere. At the beginning I was starting a band with Steve Gorman, the drummer from the Black Crowes, and a bass player when [*drummer*] Randy [*Castillo*] died. Then Matt asked if I wanted to jam at the benefit for Randy's family. Everybody had their own things going on, but everybody just dropped what they were doing, Duff rented a house out here in L.A. and we just focused on it.

TG Duff has spoken about an intangible connection between the three of you. How would you describe it?

SLASH Duff's always been a real unique, great sounding bass player. And the first time I saw Matt I knew we had to get him into GN'R. He caught my ear as one of the most amazing drummers I'd ever heard. I saw him at the Universal Amphitheater in L.A. with the Cult, way before Steve Adler was out of the band. Then a year later Steve got kicked out, and I remembered Matt. We had to get him in.

Before this, me, Duff and Matt hadn't been in a room together in six years, and we'd forgotten how classic our chemistry is. I think Axl really took it for granted how great the four of us—including Izzy—worked together, because it was hard for him to replace us. When the three of us walked into Mates, this rehearsal studio, we all had a real feeling about it. All of a sudden I didn't feel like your regular Joe fuckin' off the street guitar player. And as soon as we all started playing, there was a real powerful vibe going. That was what started it.

TG Conceivably, if Guns had stayed together and kept that original feeling from the early days, is this an album they could have made? Would you have presented this type of guitar music to Axl?

SLASH I got so disillusioned with Guns that I even stopped being able to write for the band. That was in '95 when I started doing Snakepit. I remember Axl threatening to sue me because he thought that material should have been for GN'R. I just didn't see Guns doing it. But, the stuff we're doing now, yeah I asked myself, I wonder if Axl thinks this should have been his? I can't help that. But whether any of us have done stuff he thinks is fuckin' great or not, when this comes out it's gonna be a lot better and sound more together than he was probably hoping it would be.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSS HALFIN

TG Another new element on the album is the fact you recorded first, then Dave came in and played his parts. With Guns, Izzy would lay his rhythm tracks, then you'd follow and fill in the spaces. Any reason for the change?

SLASH It's really no big deal. Dave asked to go in after me, and I said yeah. In Guns, I'd do my scratch tracks with Izzy, and we'd keep Izzy's takes, because they were about as involved as he'd get. We tried to use some of Dave's scratch tracks, but for the most part I just listened to myself, the drums and bass, which left a pretty good template for Dave. I try harder when I'm by myself. I came back to hear exactly how that influenced him and if all of a sudden it made my stuff seem too sparse or naked, but it worked out great.

TG But your solos were put on after everything else was recorded?

SLASH No, I usually put the solos on before the vocal. When we did *Appetite* I didn't have much experience, but I kinda had it mapped out how each part would go. I'd put my [*rhythm*] guitars down, then the harmony, then the solos. We did it like that, because back then Axl hardly sang at rehearsal, we had to play as a band without vocals. When Axl finally put the vocals on, we really didn't know how the songs were gonna turn out. We knew how the song sounded live and that was it. At that point, we'd rehearse really hard to make sure we knew the material without vocals, so we didn't use that as a crutch.

But it's nice to have vocals to work with, it can make for a certain dynamic, the ebb and flow of the song going with the vocals. So now we try to get Scott to do scratch vocals, I do the solo, then the real vocals come on afterward.

TG Because you've been rehearsing the song live, do you have a good idea of what the solo will be before entering the studio?

SLASH This record was a little different in that respect, because we wrote the material so quickly. When it came to solos, there's either something melodic singing in my head right away or on the first run at the solo, then I'll go back and see if it works. "Sucker Train Blues" has a one-take whammy bar solo. There are a few songs on this record that don't have any real planned solo. Sometimes I'll play a song enough times I feel the same exact thing every time I get to the solo section. And that was pretty much the case with this. But I never actually went out and played it live, so there's a lot of improvising on this record.

TG The solo on "Spectacle"?

SLASH That was definitely made up on the spot. In fact, that was the first song we recorded guitars on. I went to Josh's [*Abraham, producer*] studio and played in the control room—I hate doing overdubs, so I stand in the control room with huge speakers, crank it up and play like I'm in a live situation. When I got there he had these two little Yamahas [*monitors*] and that was it. I mean, how can you recreate a rock and roll environment with just these little NS-10s? We had the NS-10s cranked up as far as they'd go, and I'd brought in a tiny Fender and a distortion box, and we did the solo. It was way left field for me.

TG What about "Superhuman"? That opening riff sounds similar to your phrase on "Sweet Child O' Mine," but twisted.

SLASH That's cool, it just came out of nowhere. I think the "Sweet Child O' Mine" influence pops up, because it's a single-note style of mine, especially when I do this octave thing around a melody. I have to give Axl credit, because if he hadn't recognized it as being great, I wouldn't have used it, I thought it was a joke. It was just me doing a lick with chord changes underneath to give it some movement. Then Axl came in and started singing it. I hated that song until after '88 or '89. We were touring with Aerosmith, and it was such a huge hit you couldn't ignore it.

TG Now that it's all done and the record is ready to be released, is *Contraband* the album you wanted to make?

SLASH This is the first time I've had a real feeling of being in a band. I had such a blast, and I learned a lot, we're all real comfortable with each other. With us, we're all just so in sync, and there's no real arguing or ego problems. And the ideas just come like that [*snaps fingers*], we just have a certain kind of energy. So I'm real excited about the record. When I hear the album I find it really compelling, it really makes me want to listen to it.

"WE'RE A FKIN' ROCK BAND AND THERE'S NO COMPARISON BETWEEN LIMP BIZKIT OR KORN AND US. WE'RE STRAIGHT F**KIN' ROCK."**
—DUFF

I'm just happy we got to do our thing, and do it the way we wanted to. The cool thing about this band is we put it all together, we went through all the fuckin' bullshit, we had no fuckin' support from the very beginning. Everybody thought it was a complete fucking failure waiting to happen. Now that we've done it, it's a huge feeling of accomplishment. It reminds me of the old days.

KUSHNER This did end up being a perfect marriage of all the best elements of the *Appetite*-era Guns N' Roses, early STP. I was comfortable with those guys coming in with what they do. We didn't play it safe.

SLASH The album just sounds so original, so done, like a real band and a real record. It's just like, "Wow," you know? ■

ROSS HALFIN

"Welcome to the Jungle"

As heard on ***Appetite for Destruction*** (GEFFEN)

Words and Music by **W. Axl Rose, Slash, Izzy Stradlin', Duff McKagan and Steven Adler** • Transcribed by **Andy Aledort**

Welcome to the jungle, we got fun and games
We got everything you want, honey, we know the names
We are the people that can find whatever you may need
If you got the money, honey, we got your disease

In the jungle, welcome to the jungle
Watch it bring you to your
Sha-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na knees, knees
I wanna watch you bleed

Welcome to the jungle, we take it day by day
If you want it you're gonna bleed but it's the price you pay
And you're a very sexy girl who's very hard to please
You can taste the bright lights but you won't get them for free

In the jungle, welcome to the jungle
Feel my, my, my, my serpentine
I, I wanna hear you scream

Welcome to the jungle, it gets worse here everyday
You learn to live like an animal in the jungle where we play
If you got a hunger for what you see, you'll take it eventually
You can have anything you want
But you better not take it from me

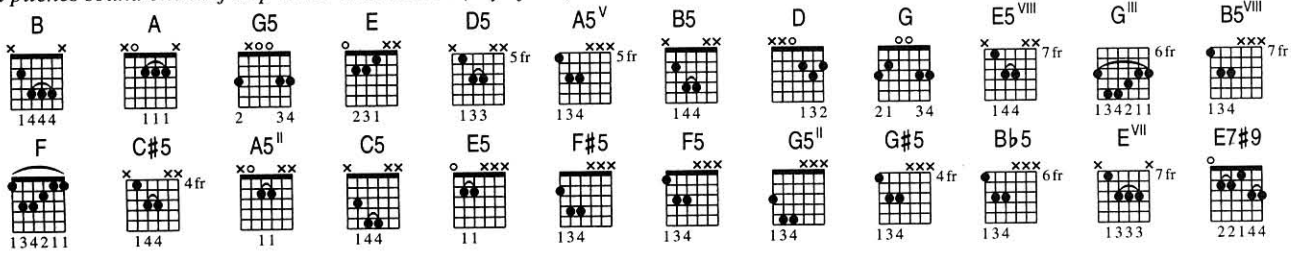
In the jungle, welcome to the jungle
Watch it bring you to your
Sha-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na knees, knees
I'm gonna watch you bleed

And when you're high you never
Ever want to come down, so down, so down, so down
Yeah
You know where you are? You're in the jungle, baby
You're gonna die

In the jungle, welcome to the jungle
Watch it bring you to your
Sha-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na knees, knees
In the jungle, welcome to the jungle
Feel my, my, my, my serpentine
Jungle, welcome to the jungle, watch it bring you to your
Sha-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na knees, knees
Down in the jungle, welcome to the jungle
Watch it bring you to your...
It's gonna bring you down, huh

All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭).

All pitches sound one half step lower than written (key of E♭).

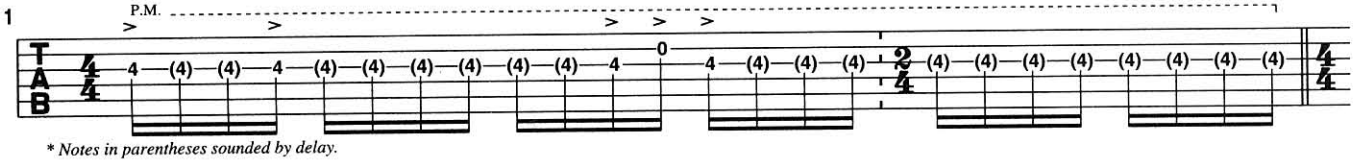


A Intro (0:00)

Free Time

N.C.

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist., reverb and delay)*



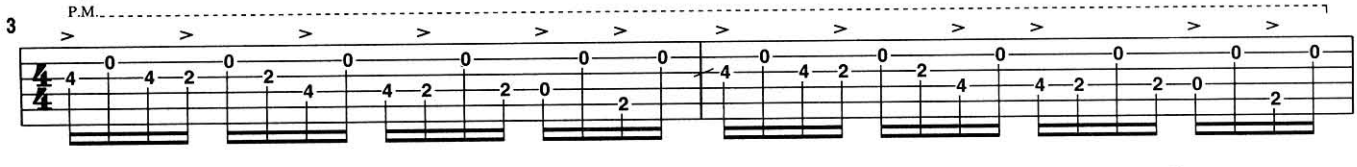
** Notes in parentheses sounded by delay.*

Moderate Rock ♩ = 104 (0:04)

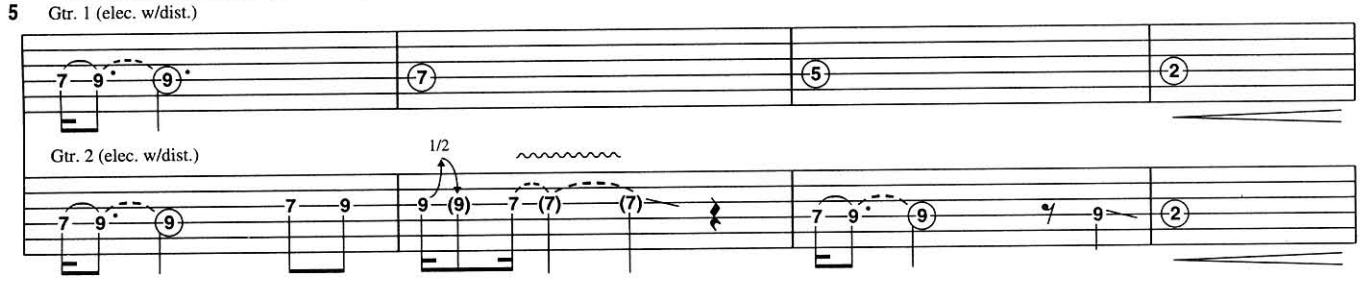
(spoken) **(Oh my God)**

NC.

Riff A

P.M.

N.C.(B5) (A5) G E

Gtr. 1 repeats Riff A twice (see meas. 3)



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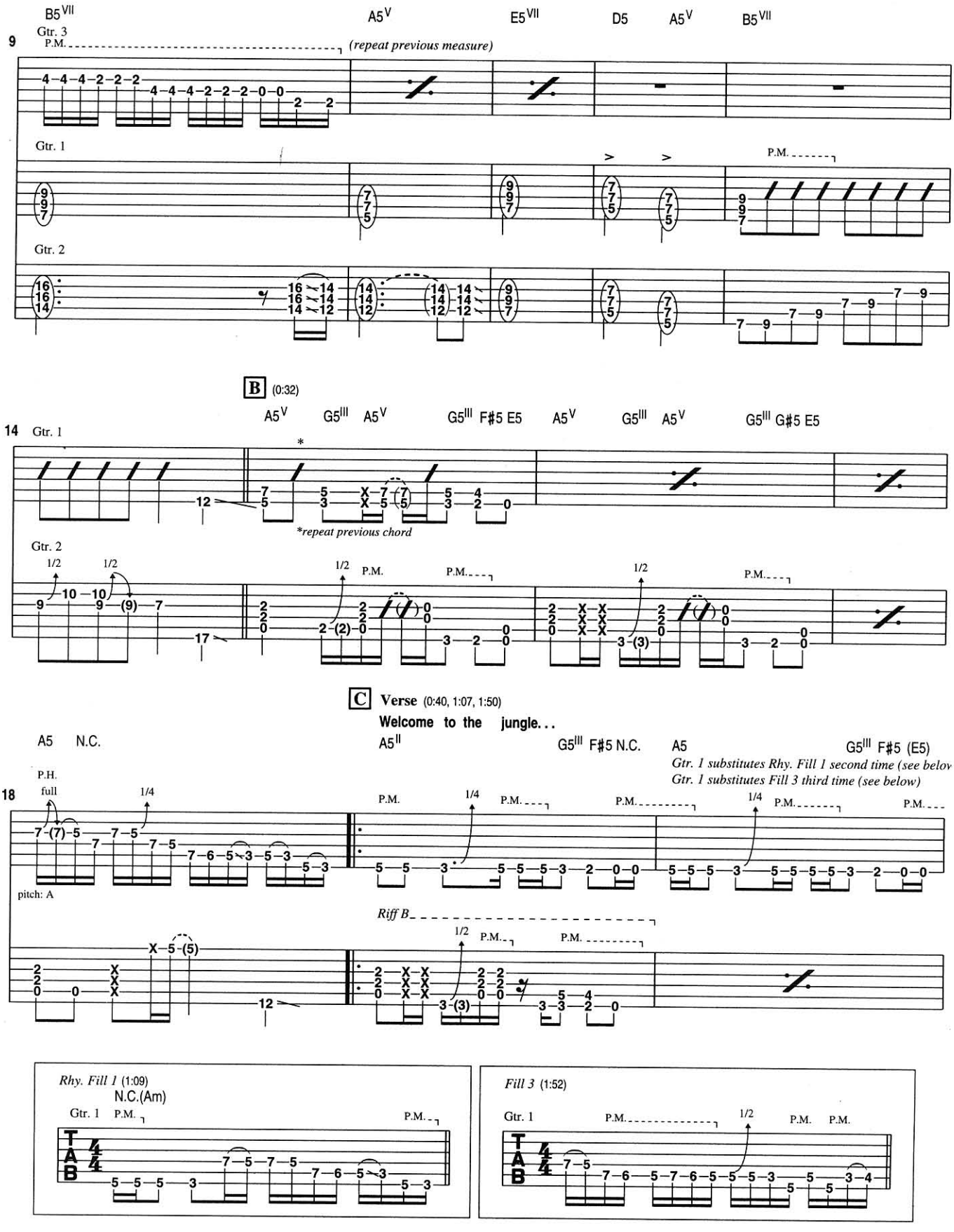
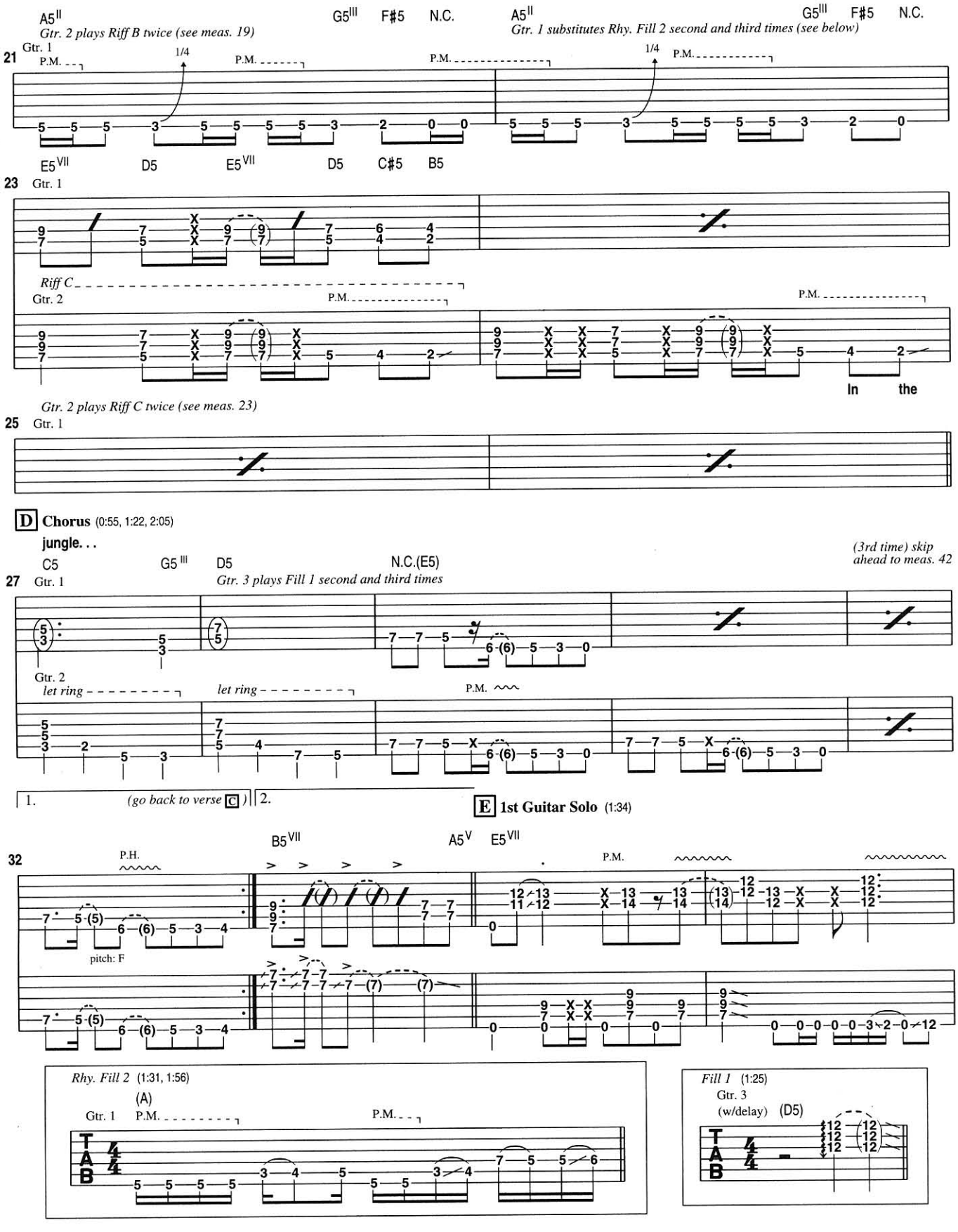
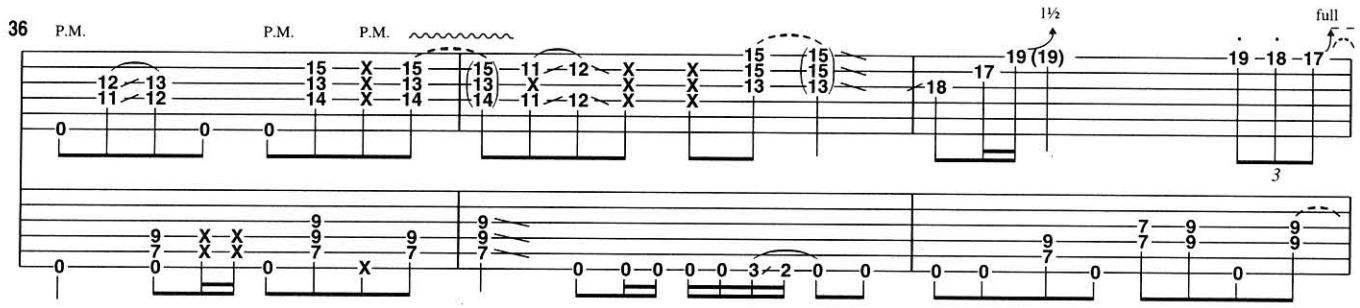
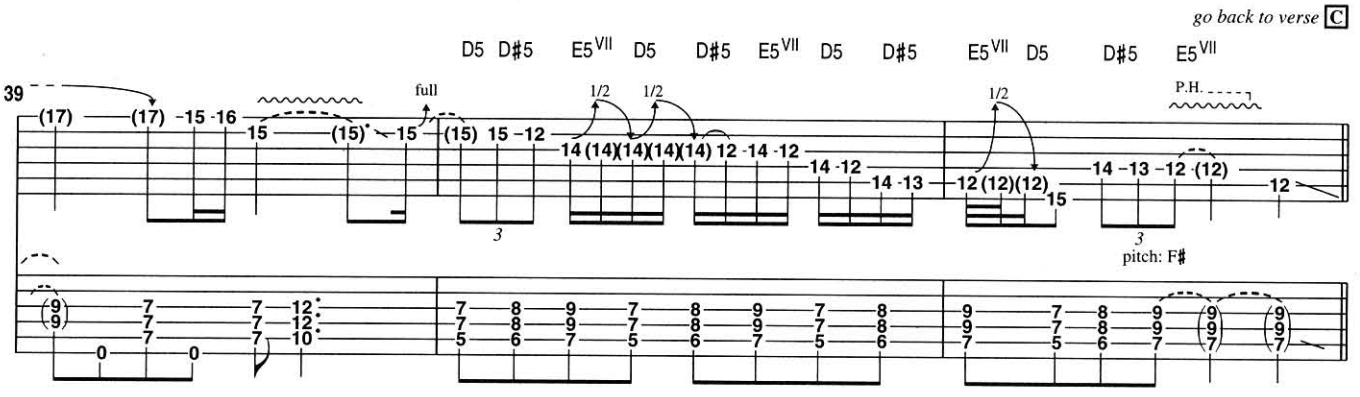
"Welcome to the Jungle"



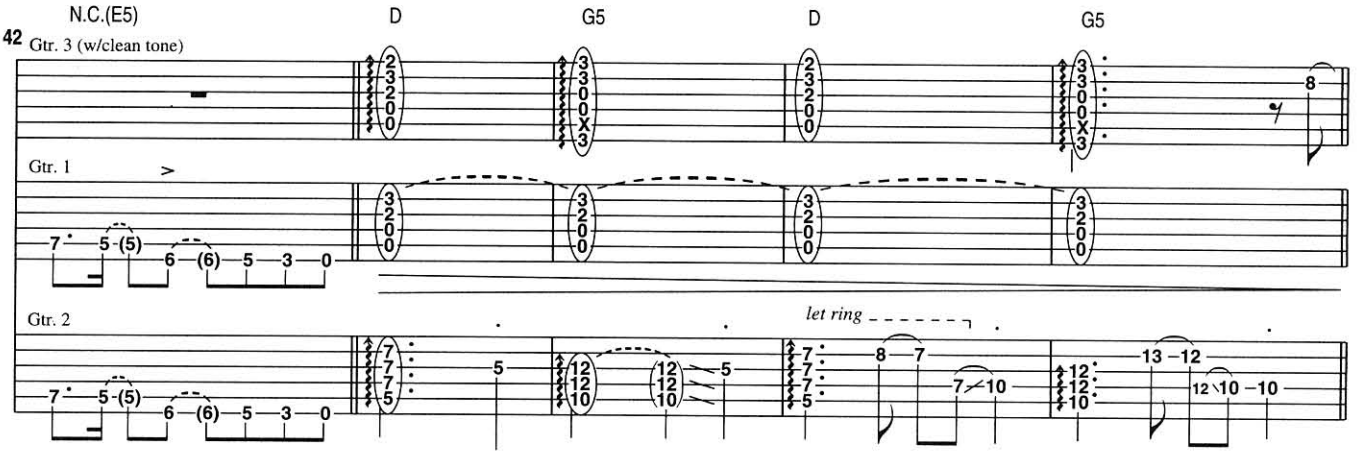
A5II
G5III
F♯5
N.C.
A5II
G5III
F♯5
N.C.
Gtr. 2 plays Riff B twice (see meas. 19)
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 2 second and third times (see below)
21
Gtr. 1
P.M.
1/4
E5VII
D5
E5VII
D5
C♯5
B5
23
Gtr. 1
Riff C
Gtr. 2
P.M.
In the
Gtr. 2 plays Riff C twice (see meas. 23)
25
Gtr. 1
D Chorus (0:55, 1:22, 2:05)
jungle. . .
C5
G5III
D5
N.C.(E5)
(3rd time) skip ahead to meas. 42
27
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 second and third times
Gtr. 2
let ring
let ring
P.M.
1.
(go back to verse C)
2.
E 1st Guitar Solo (1:34)
32
P.H.
B5VII
A5V
E5VII
P.M.
pitch: F
Rhy. Fill 2 (1:31, 1:56)
(A)
Gtr. 1
P.M.
P.M.
Fill 1 (1:25)
Gtr. 3
(w/delay)
(D5)

"Welcome to the Jungle"



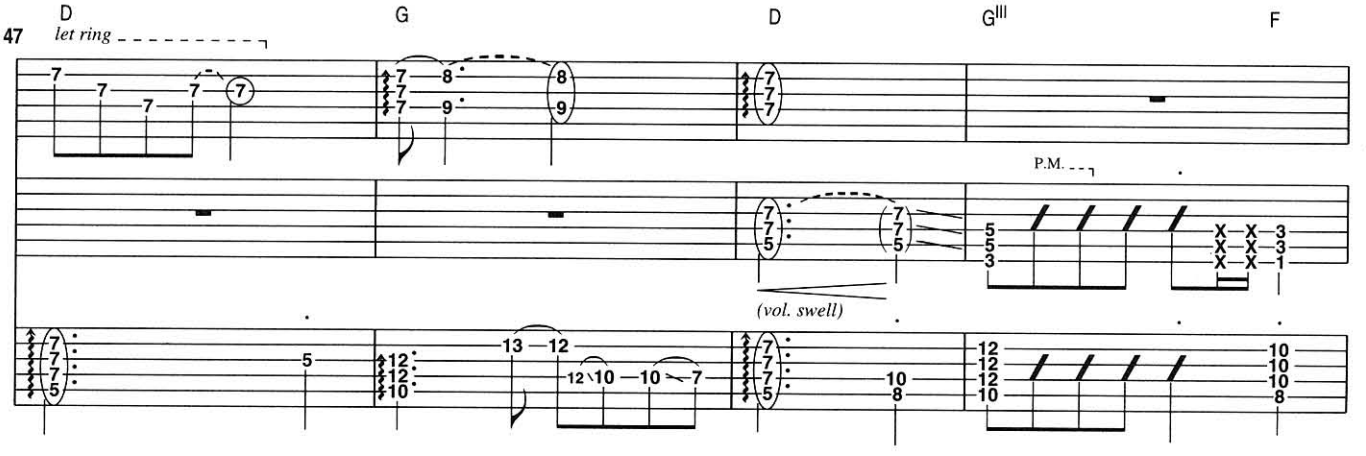
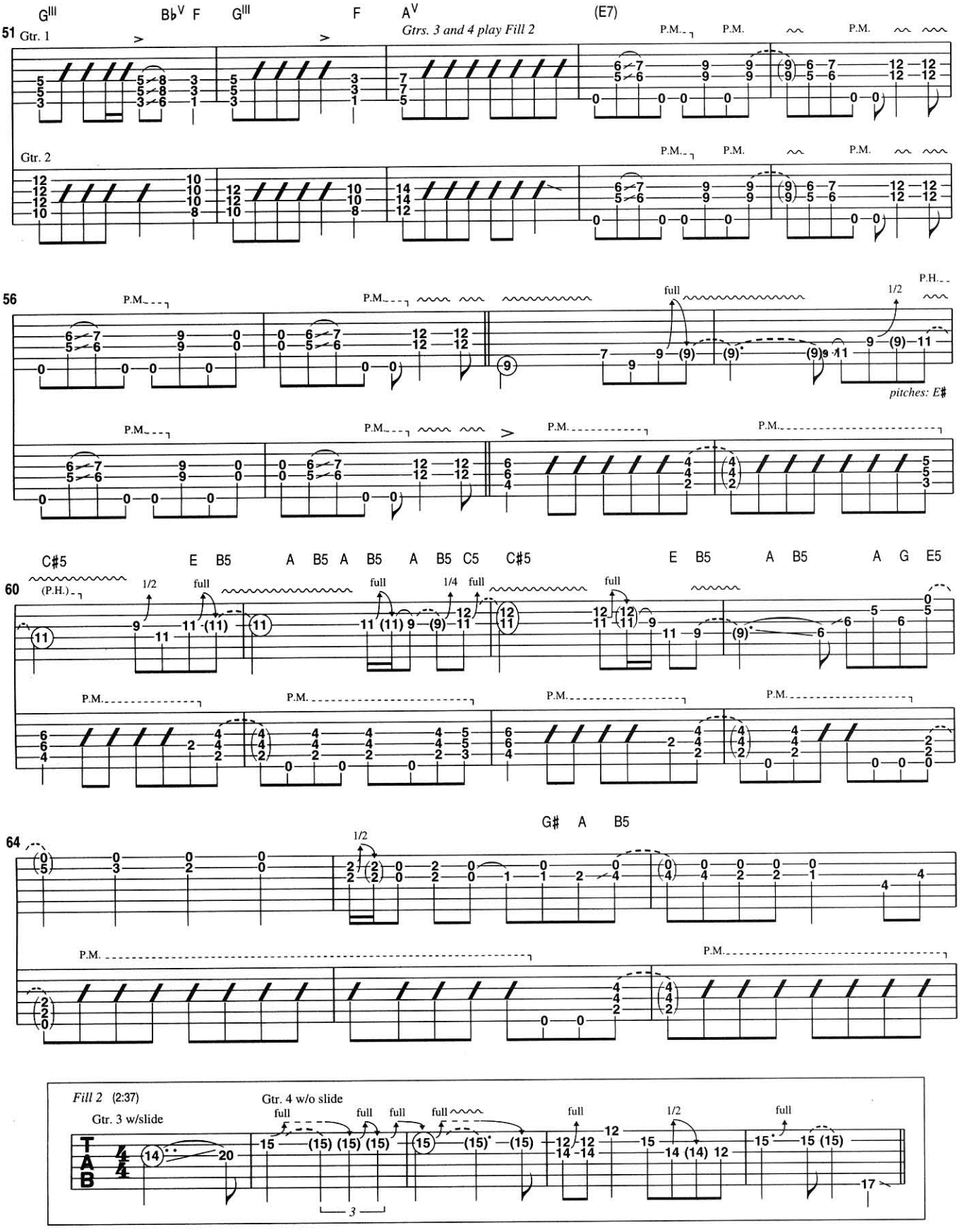


F (2:17)



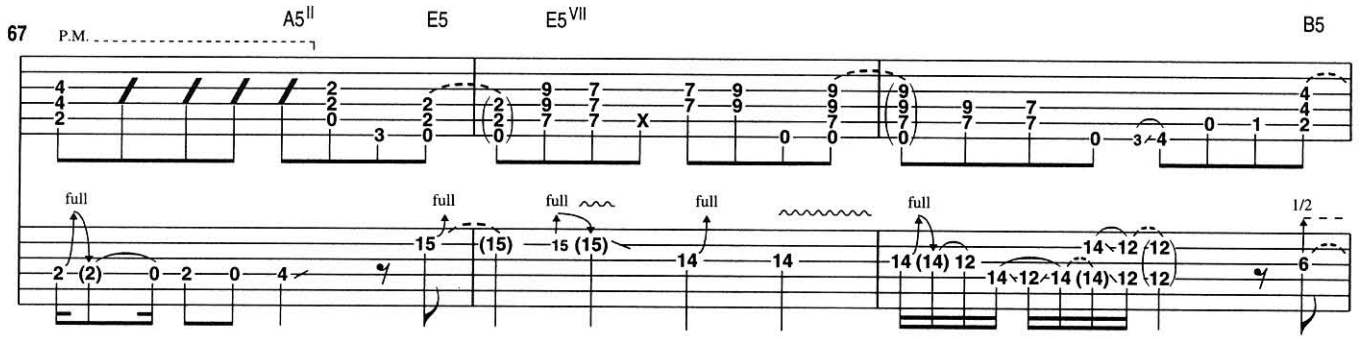
G **Bridge** (2:25)

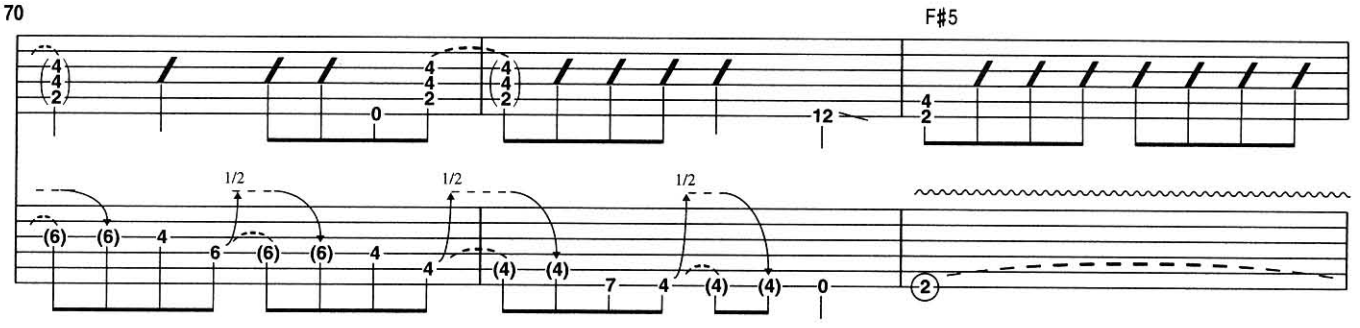
And when you're high you never. . .

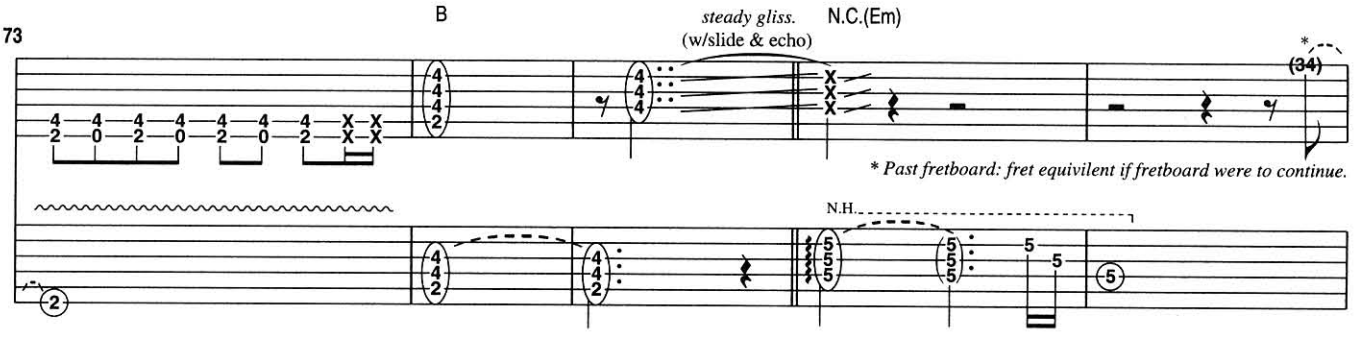


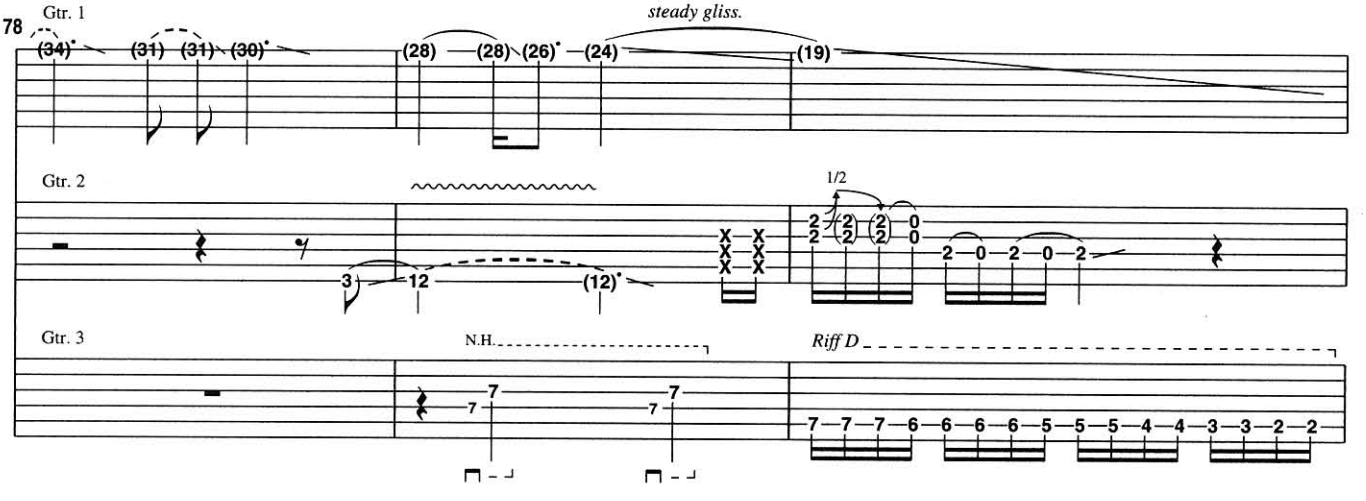
51
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2
G III
B♭V F
G III
F
A V
(E7)
Gtrs. 3 and 4 play Fill 2
P.M.
56
full
1/2
P.H.
pitches: E♯
60
C♯5
E B5
A B5 A B5 A B5 C5
C♯5
E B5
A B5
A G E5
(P.H.)
1/2
full
1/4
64
G♯ A B5
Fill 2 (2:37)
Gtr. 3 w/slide
Gtr. 4 w/o slide
T
A
B

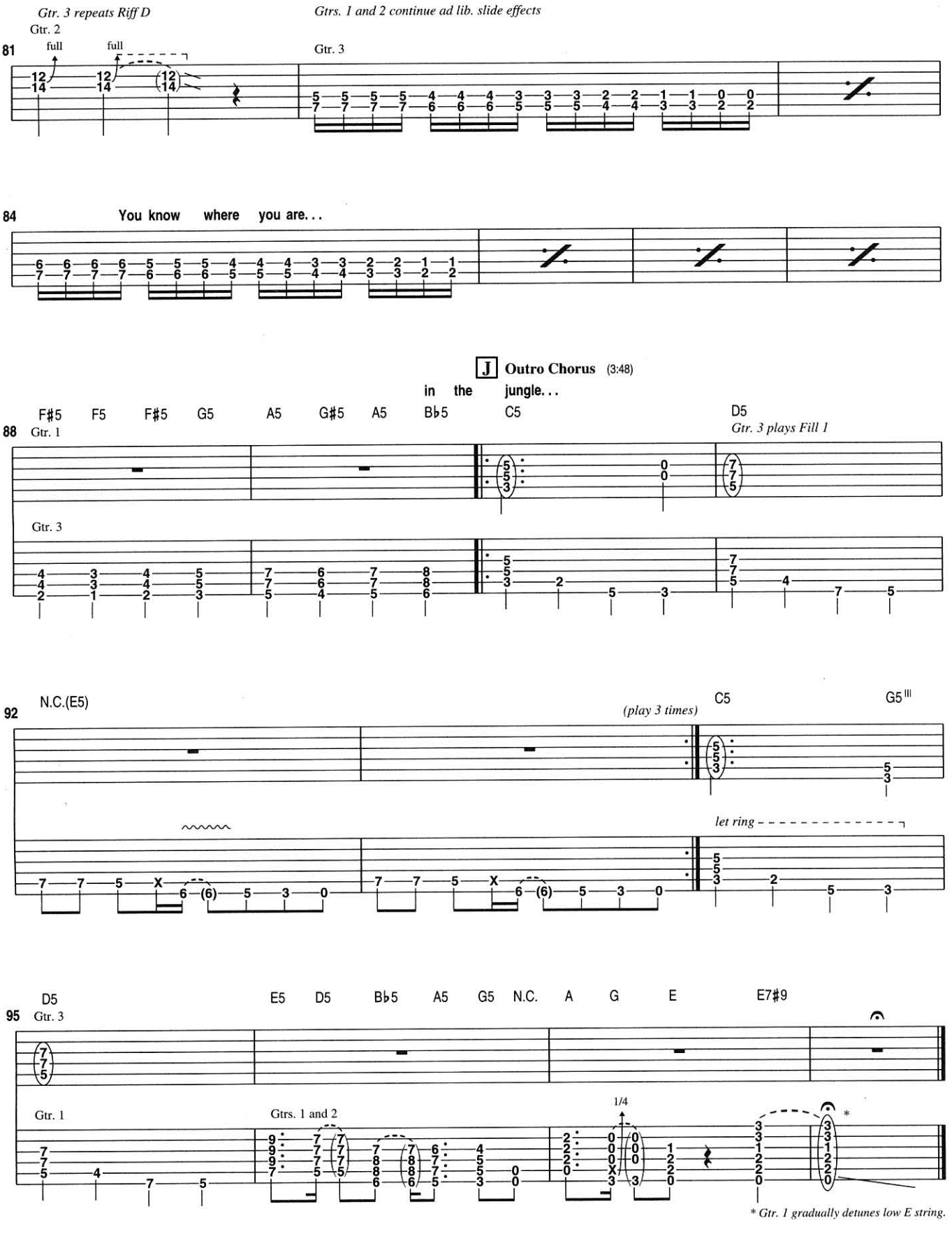
"Welcome to the Jungle"










Gtr. 3 repeats Riff D
Gtrs. 1 and 2 continue ad lib. slide effects
Gtr. 2
full
full
81
Gtr. 3
84
You know where you are...
J Outro Chorus (3:48)
in the jungle...
F♯5 F5 F♯5 G5 A5 G♯5 A5 B♭5 C5 D5
88
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1
Gtr. 3
N.C.(E5)
92
(play 3 times)
C5
G5
let ring
D5 E5 D5 B♭5 A5 G5 N.C. A G E E7♯9
95
Gtr. 3
Gtr. 1
Gtrs. 1 and 2
1/4
* Gtr. 1 gradually detunes low E string.

"Slither"

As heard on the Velvet Revolver recording ***Contraband*** (RCA)

Words and Music by **Velvet Revolver** • Transcribed by **Jordan Baker**

Hey, hey, hey

When you look, you see right through me
Cut the rope, defend to my knees
Born and broken every single time
Always keep me under finger
That's the spot where you would tune me
Might see some type of pleasure in my mind

1st chorus:
Yeah, here comes the water
It comes to wash away the sins of you and I
This time you will see

Hey, hey, hey

When you seek me, you'll destroy me
Rid my mind and smell the poppies
Bored and bloodied every single time
Always keep me under finger
That's the spot where you might linger
Might see some type of pleasure in my mind

2nd chorus:
Yeah, here comes the water
It comes to wash away the sins of you and I
This time you will see

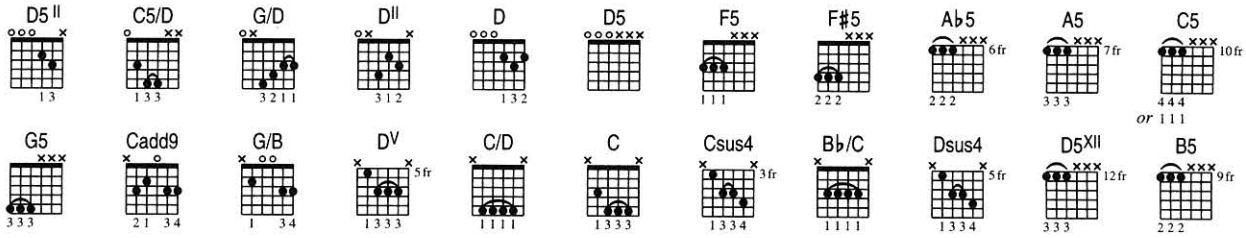
Like holy water
It only finds you faster than you've ever tried
This time with me

When you look, you see right through me
Cut the rope, defend to my knees
Bored and bloodied every single time

2nd chorus

Hey, hey, hey

All guitars are in drop-D tuning (low to high: D A D G B E).

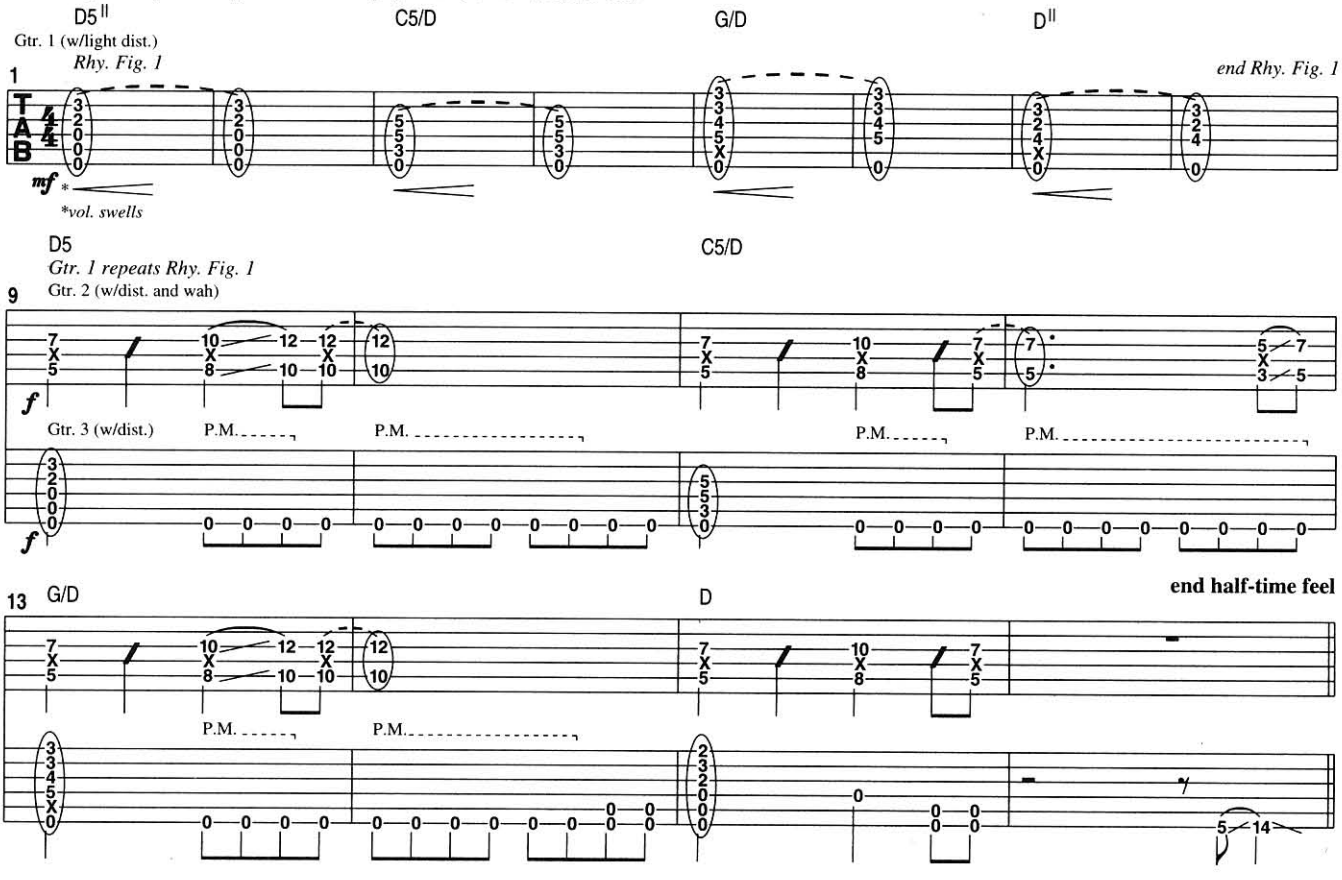


A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderate Rock ♩ = 142

w/half-time feel

w/pick scrape sound effects next 8 meas. (performed by Gtr. 2 w/dist. and wah)



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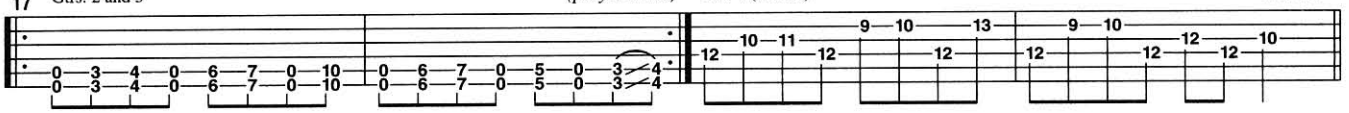
B (0:27, 1:22)

D5 F5 F♯5 A5 A♭5 A5 D5 C5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 G5 D5 F5 F♯5 D5 F5 F♯5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 C5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 G5 D5 F5 F♯5

Rhy. Fig. 2 — *end Rhy. Fig. 2* — *Gtrs. 2 and 3 repeat Rhy. Fig. 2*

17 Gtrs. 2 and 3 — *(play 3 times)* — Gtr. 4 (w/dist.)

C **1st and 2nd Verses** (0:41, 1:35)

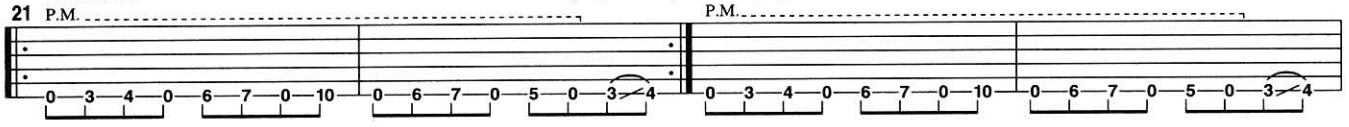
1. When you look...
2. When you seek...

N.C.

Riff A — *end Riff A* — *Gtr. 4 plays Fill 1 on first verse*

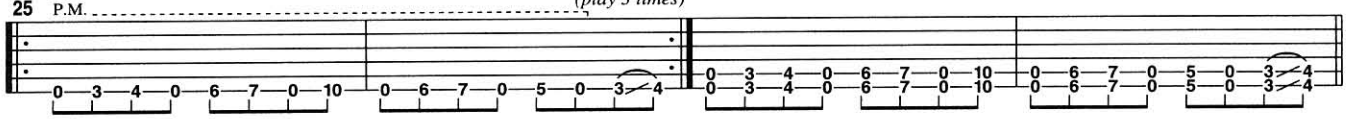
Gtrs. 2 and 3 — *(play 3 times)* — *Gtr. 4 plays Fill 2 on second verse*

21 P.M. P.M.



N.C. D5 F5 F♯5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 C5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 G5 D5 F5

25 P.M. *(play 3 times)*



D **Chorus** (1:08, 2:02, 3:24)

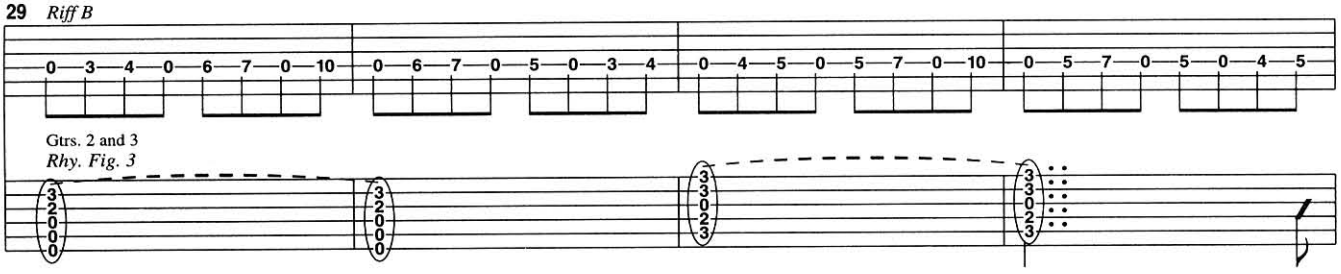
w/half-time feel

Yeah **here comes** **the** **water...**

D5 Cadd9

Gtr. 4

29 *Riff B*



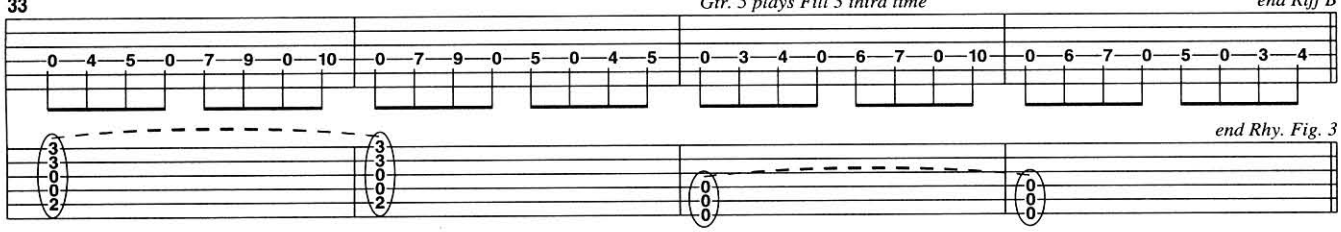
Gtrs. 2 and 3

Rhy. Fig. 3

(1st time) go back to **B**

G/B D5 *(2nd and 3rd times) continue to meas. 37*

33 *Gtr. 5 plays Fill 3 third time* *end Riff B*

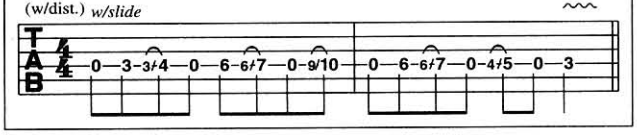


end Rhy. Fig. 3

Fill 1 (0:51)

Gtr. 4 N.C.

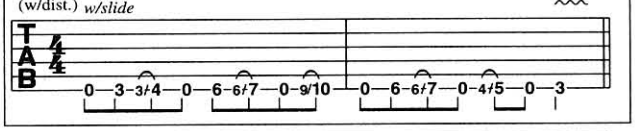
(w/dist.) *w/slide*



Fill 2 (1:45)

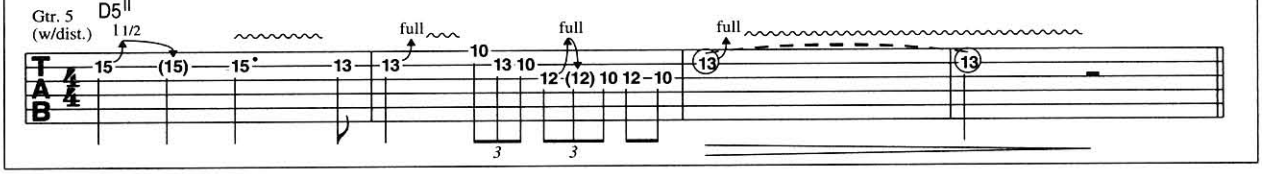
Gtr. 4 N.C.

(w/dist.) *w/slide*



Fill 3 (3:34)

Gtr. 5 (w/dist.) D5



"Slither"

(2:16, 3:38)

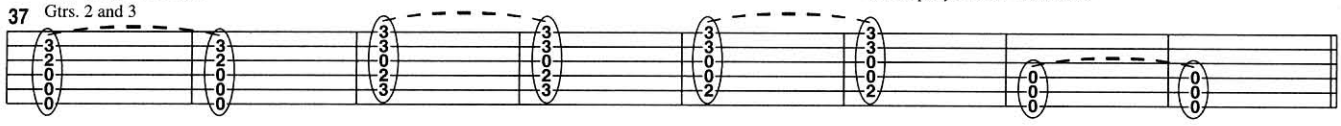
(2nd time)
skip ahead to outro H

D5 II — Cadd9 — G/B — D5

Gtr. 4 repeats Riff B

Gtr. 5 plays Fill 4 third time

37 Gtrs. 2 and 3



E Interlude (2:30)

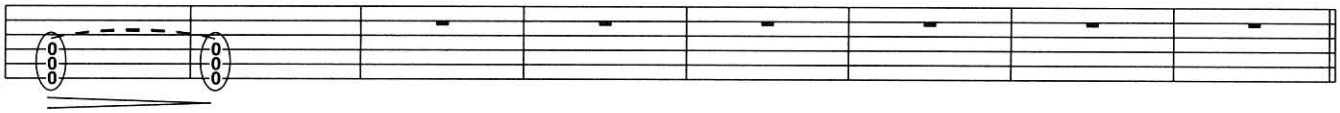
D5 — C5/D — G/B — D II

end half-time feel

Gtr. 1 plays first seven bars of Rhy. Fig. 1 (see meas. 1)

45 Gtrs. 2 and 3

w/random feedback (Gtr. 4) next six bars

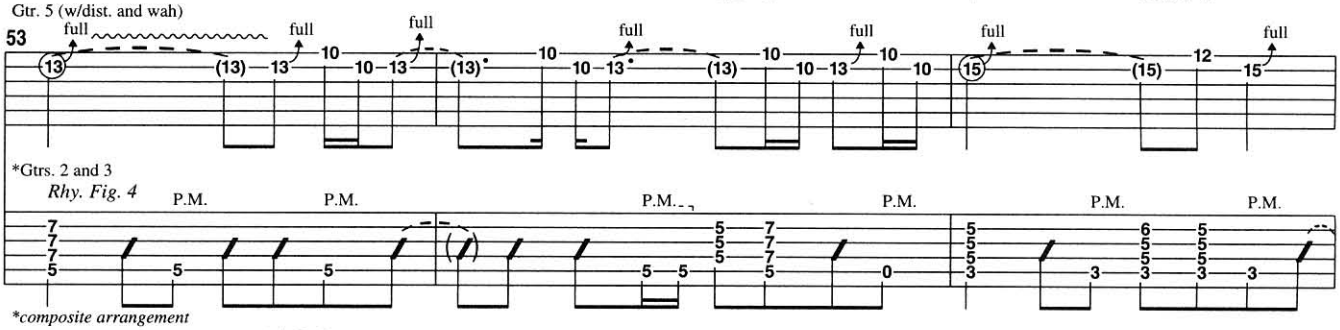


F Guitar Solo (2:43)

D V — C/D D V — C — Csus4 C

Gtr. 5 (w/dist. and wah)

53



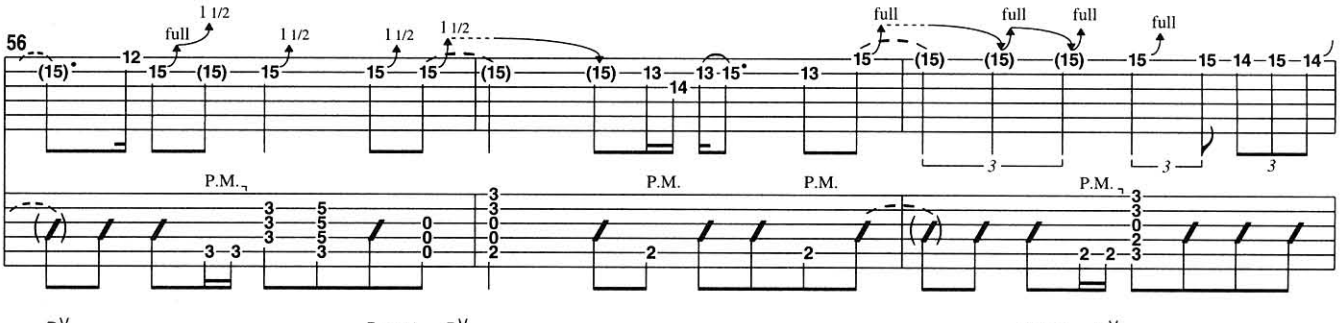
*Gtrs. 2 and 3

Rhy. Fig. 4

**composite arrangement*

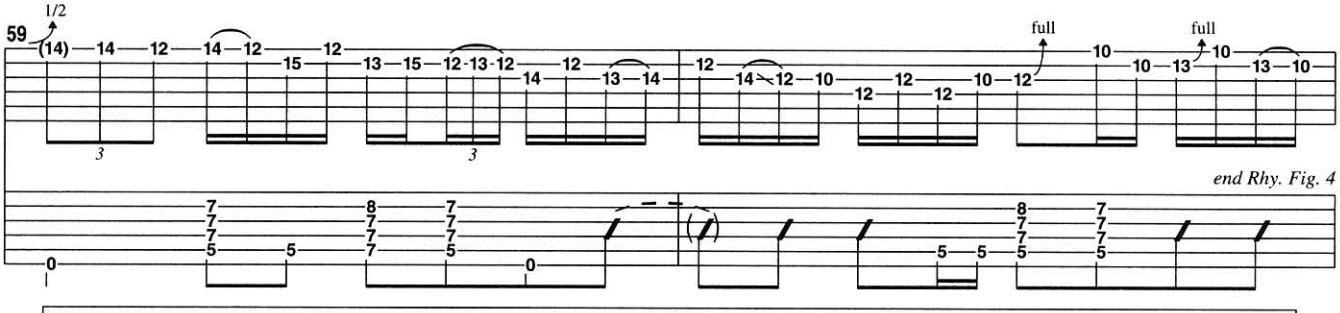
B♭/C C — G/B — Cadd9

56



D V — Dsus4 D V — Dsus4 D V

59

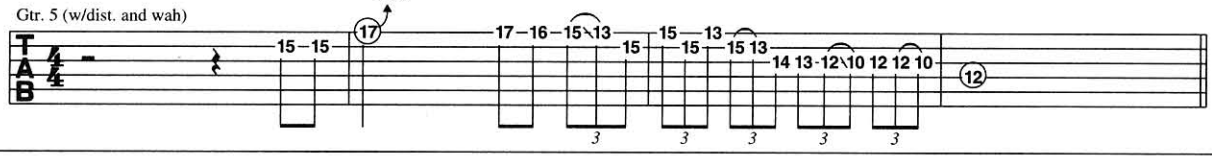


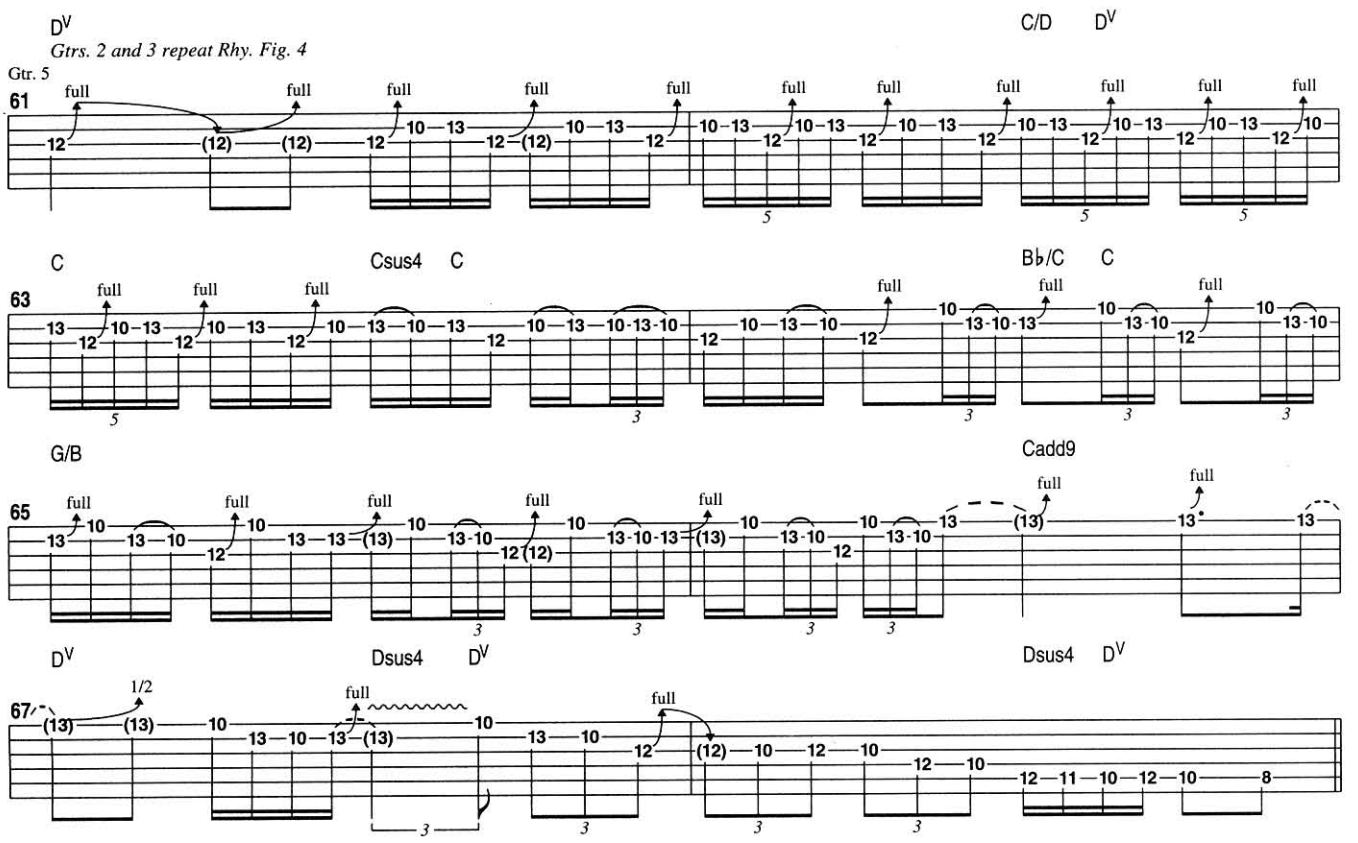
end Rhy. Fig. 4

Fill 4 (3:45)

G/B — D5

Gtr. 5 (w/dist. and wah)

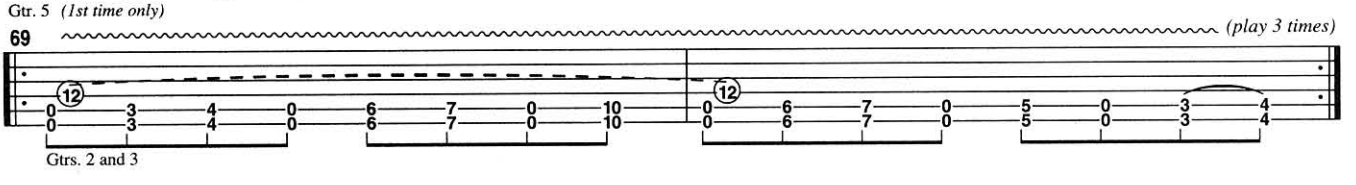




G **3rd Verse** (3:11)

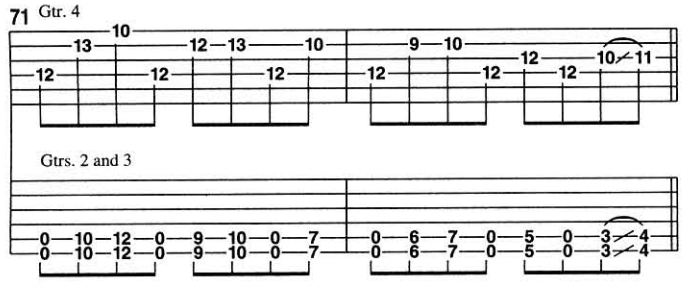
When you look...

D5 F5 F♯5 A5 A♭5 A5 D5 C5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 G5 D5 F5 F♯5



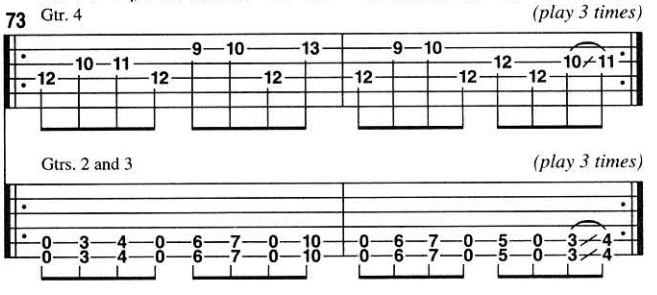
go back to chorus **D**

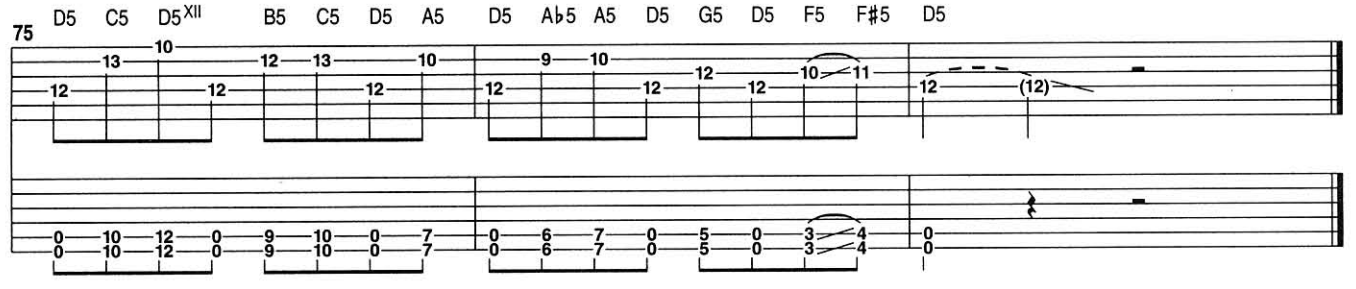
D5 C5 D5XII B5 C5 D5 A5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 G5 D5 F5 F♯5



H **Outro** (3:51)

D5 F5 F♯5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 C5 D5 A♭5 A5 D5 G5 D5 F5 F♯5





"Live and Let Die"

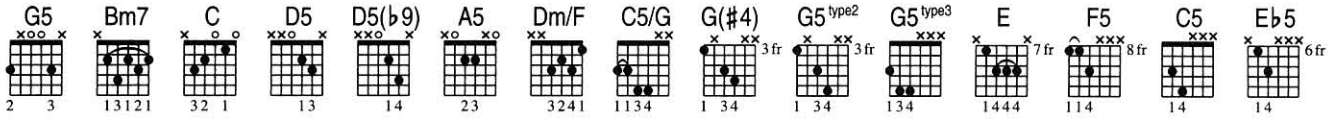
As heard on ***Use Your Illusion I*** (GEFFEN)

Words and Music by **Paul McCartney and Linda McCartney** • Transcribed by **Dave Whitehill**

When you were young and your heart was an open book
You used to say live and let live
(You know you did, you know you did, you know you did)
But if this ever-changing world in which we live in
Makes you give in and cry, say live and let die
Live and let die

What does it matter to ya
When ya got a job to do ya got to do it well, you got to give the other fella hell

You used to say live and let live
(You know you did, you know you did, you know you did)
But if this ever-changing world in which we live in
Makes you give in and cry, say live and let die
Live and let die



A **1st Verse** (0:00)

Slowly ♩ = 64

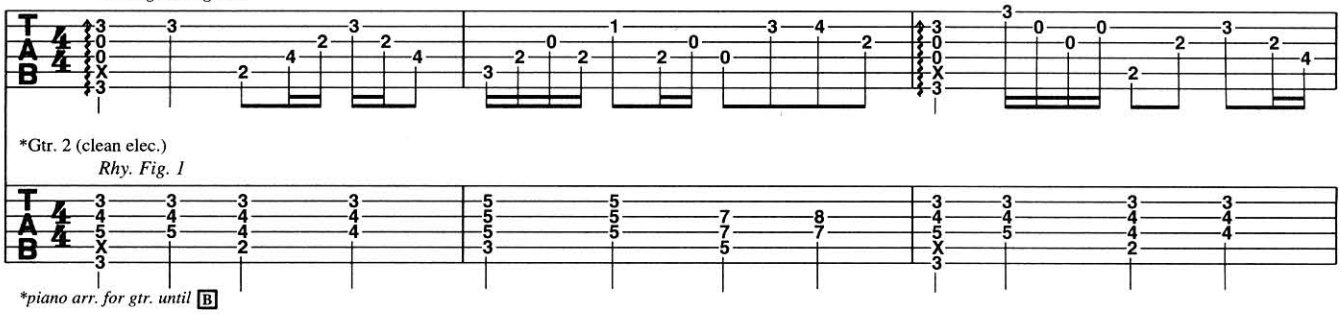
When you were young...

G5 Bm7 C D5 D5(♭9) G5 Bm7

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/clean tone and chorus)

let ring throughout

1

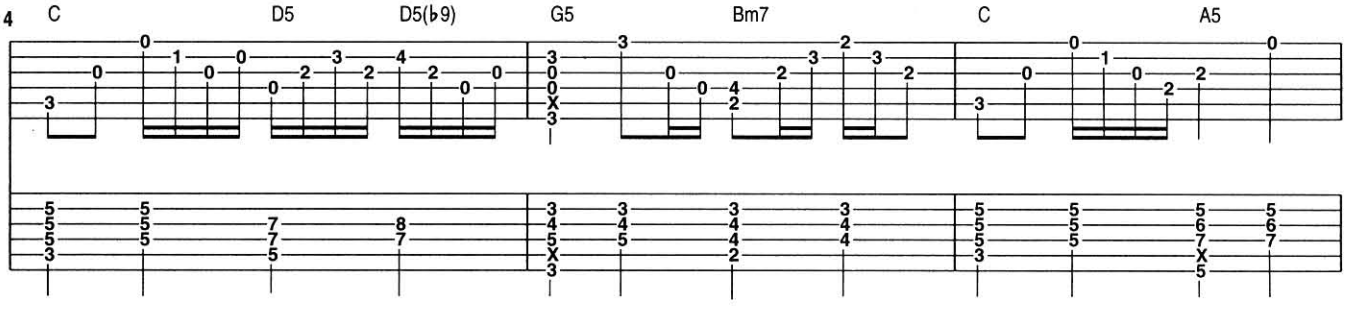


*Gtr. 2 (clean elec.)

Rhy. Fig. 1

**piano arr. for gtr. until* B

4 C D5 D5(♭9) G5 Bm7 C A5



B **Chorus** (0:31, 2:16)

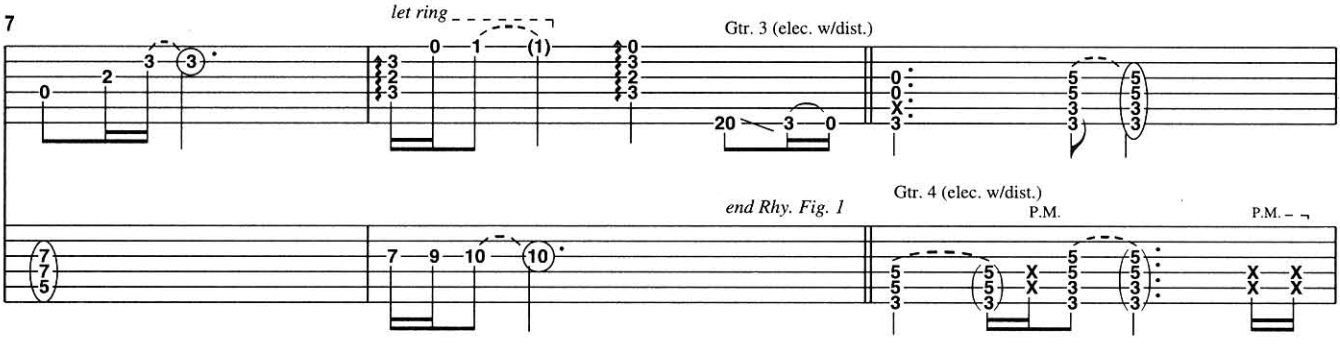
Say live and let die...

D5 Dm/F G5 C5/G

let ring

7

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)



end Rhy. Fig. 1

Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist.)

P.M. P.M.

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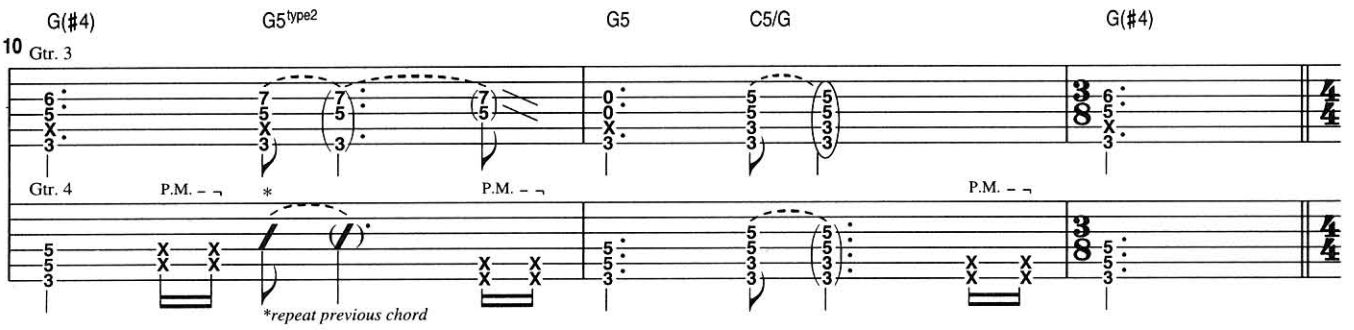
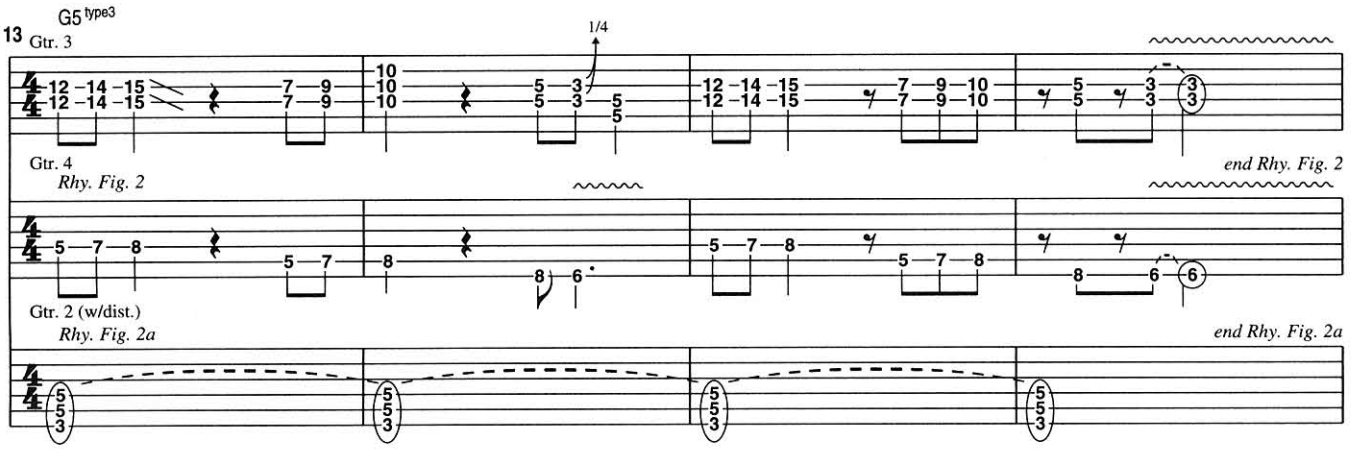
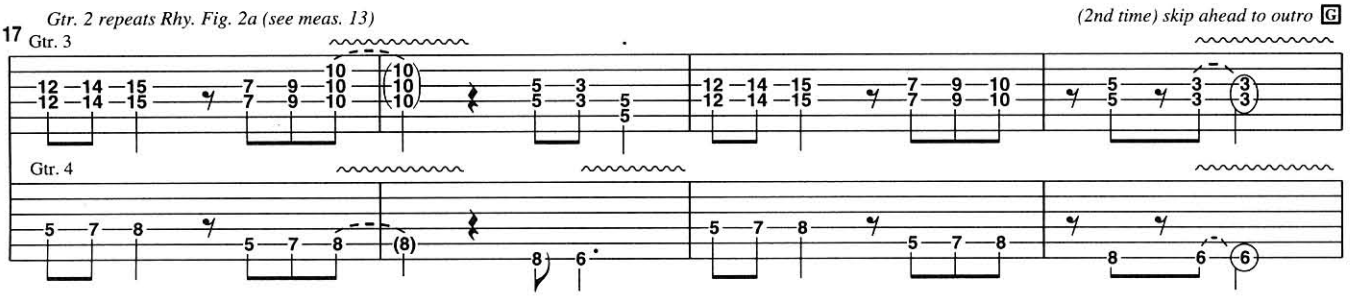
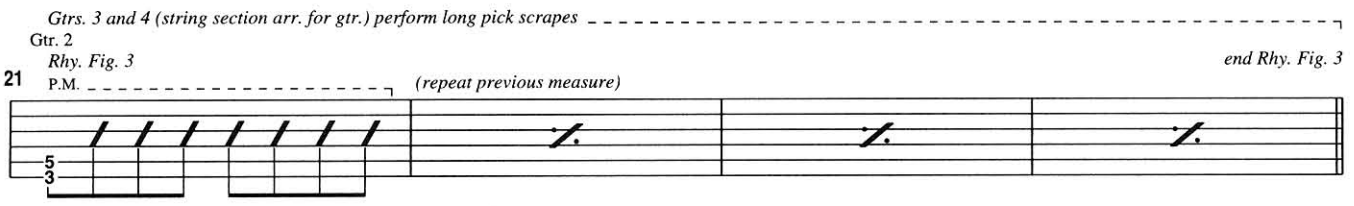


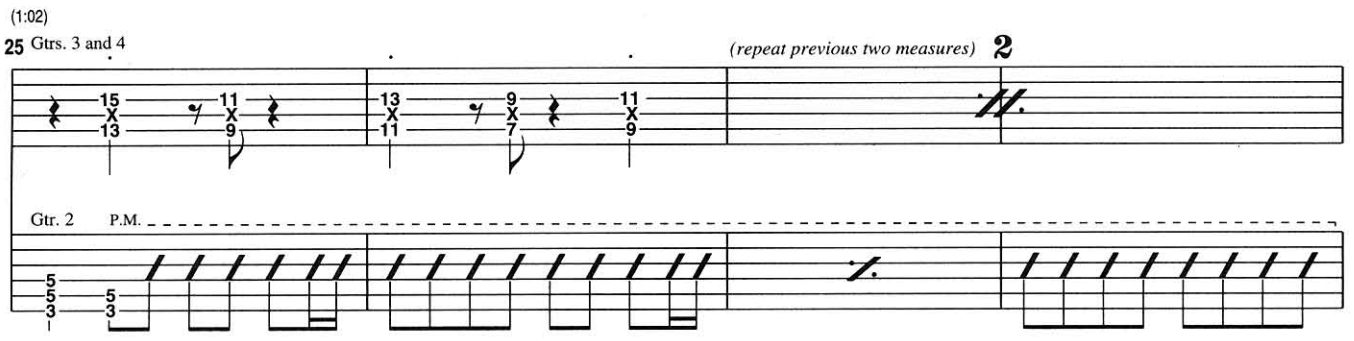
C **1st and 3rd Interludes** (0:43, 2:27)

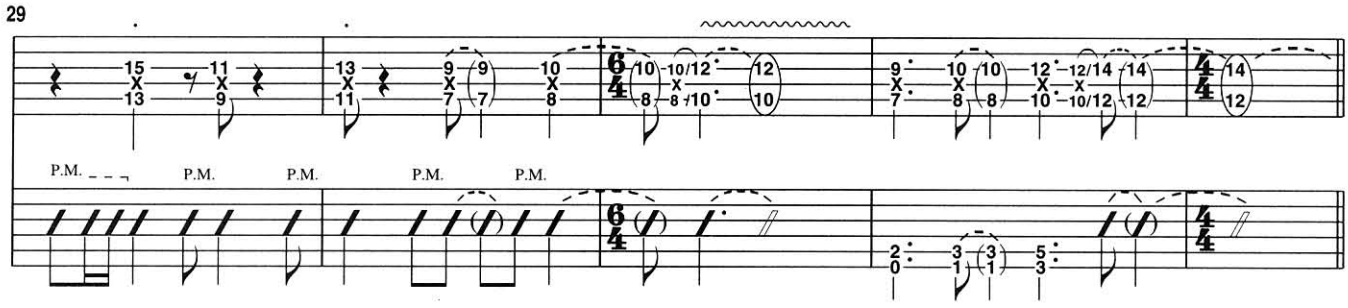
Faster ♩ = 152







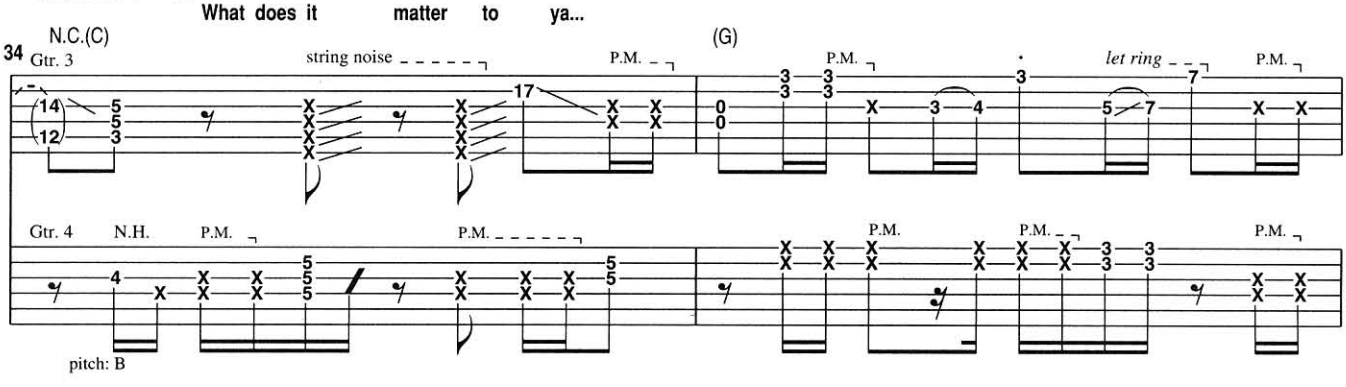


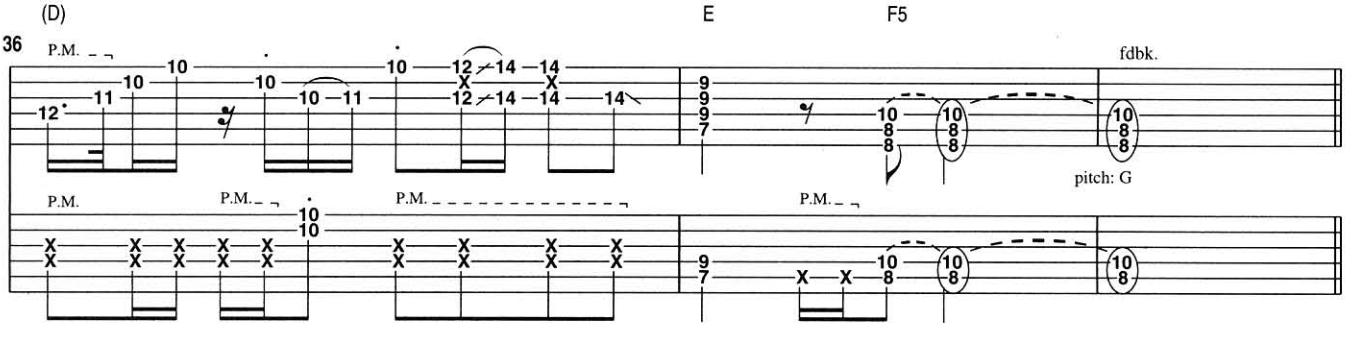


D **Bridge** (1:18)

Half-time ♩ = 76

What does it matter to ya...





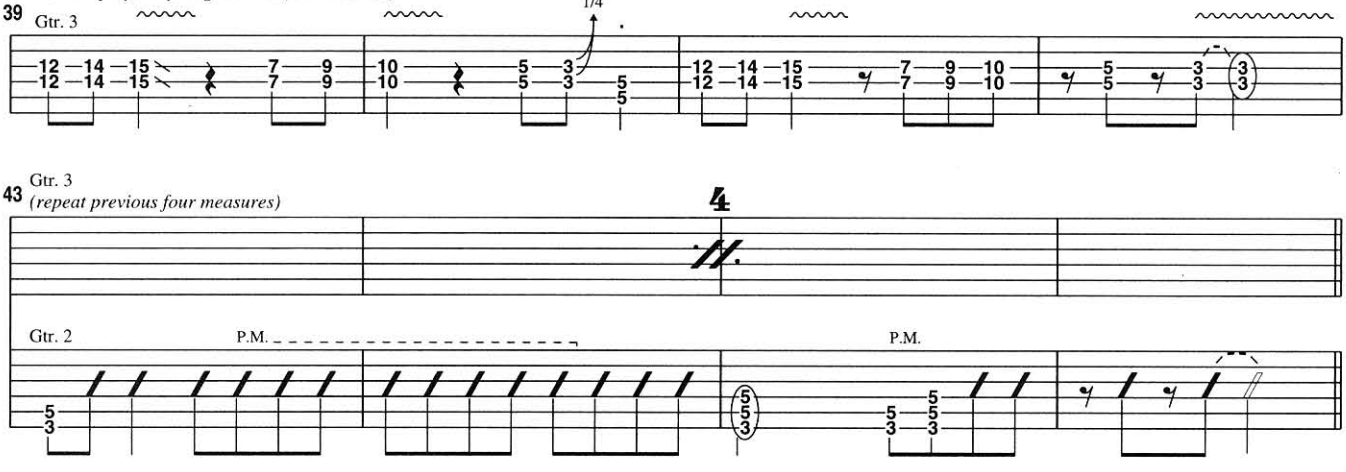
E **2nd Interlude** (1:34)

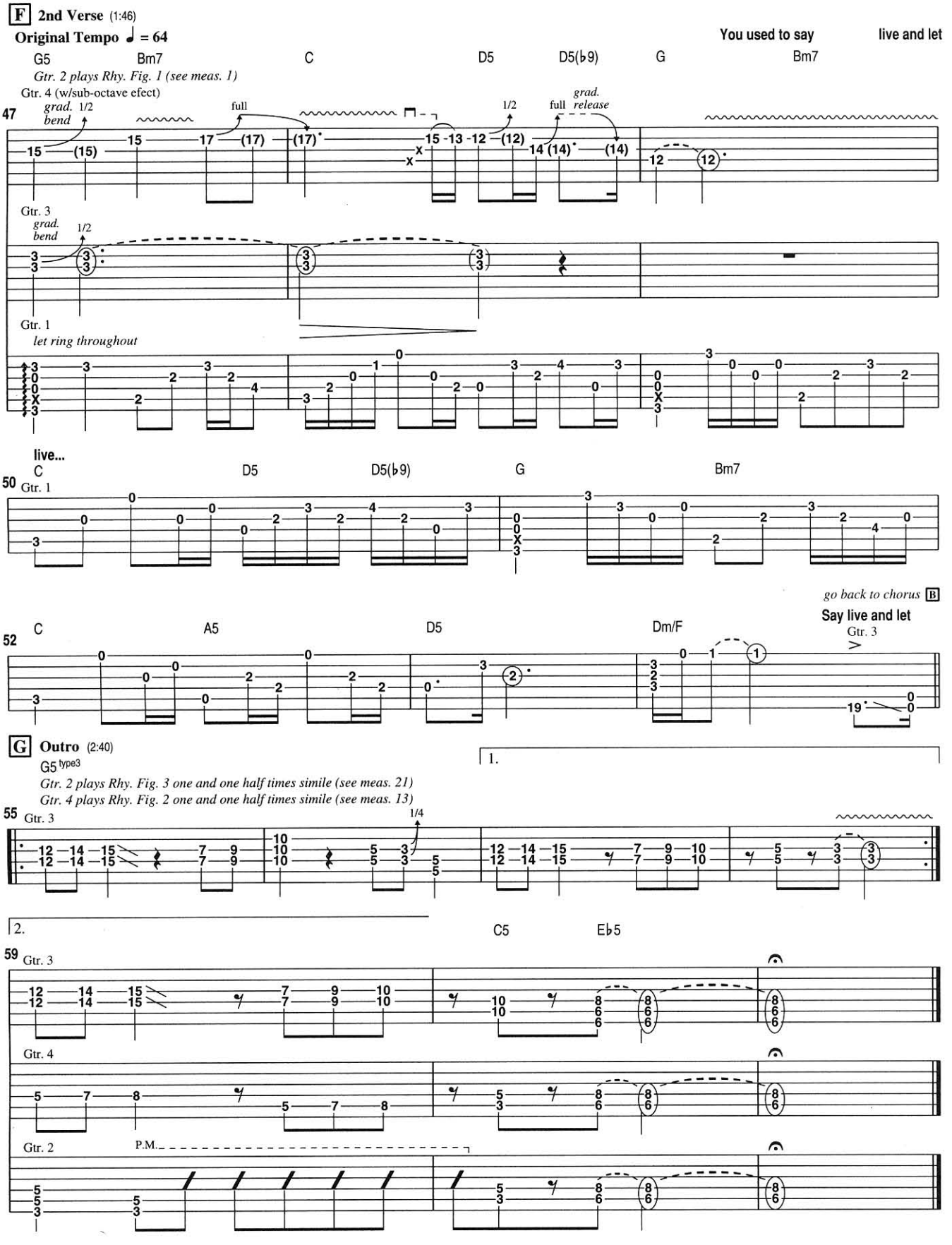
end Half-time ♩ = 152

G5 type3

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 (see meas. 21)

Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see meas. 13)




F 2nd Verse (1:46)
Original Tempo ♩ = 64
You used to say
live and let
G5
Bm7
C
D5
D5(♭9)
G
Bm7
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see meas. 1)
Gtr. 4 (w/sub-octave efect)
47
grad. bend
1/2
full
1/2
full
grad. release
Gtr. 3
grad. bend
1/2
Gtr. 1
let ring throughout
live...
C
D5
D5(♭9)
G
Bm7
50
Gtr. 1
go back to chorus B
Say live and let
C
A5
D5
Dm/F
52
Gtr. 3
G Outro (2:40)
G5 type3
1.
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 one and one half times simile (see meas. 21)
Gtr. 4 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 one and one half times simile (see meas. 13)
55
Gtr. 3
1/4
2.
C5
E♭5
59
Gtr. 3
Gtr. 4
Gtr. 2
P.M.

"Paradise City"

As heard on ***Appetite for Destruction*** (GEFFEN)

Words and Music by **W. Axl Rose, Slash, Izzy Stradlin', Duff McKagan and Steven Adler** • Transcribed by **Andy Aledort**

1st chorus (sung 2x):
Take me down to the paradise city
Where the grass is green and the girls are pretty
(Take) (me) (home)
Oh, won't you please take me home

Just a urchin livin' under the street
I'm a hard case that's tough to beat
I'm your charity case so buy me somethin' to eat
I'll pay you at another time, take it to the end of the line

Rags to riches or so they say
You gotta keep pushin' for the fortune and fame
You know it's, it's all a gamble when it's just a game
You treat it like a capital crime, everybody's doin' their time

2nd chorus:
Take me down to the paradise city
Where the grass is green and the girls are pretty
Take me home, yeah, yeah
Take me down to the paradise city
Where the grass is green and the girls are pretty
Oh, won't you please take me home

Strapped in the chair of the city's gas chamber
Why I'm here, I can't quite remember
The surgeon general says it's hazardous to breathe
I'd have another cigarette but I can't see
Tell me who you're gonna believe

2nd chorus

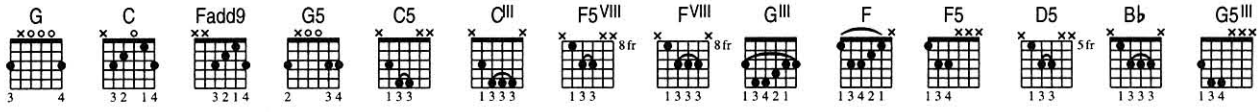
So far away (4x)

Capitain America's been torn apart
Now he's a court jester with a broken heart
He said, "Turn me around and take me back to the start"
I must be losing my mind, are you blind
I've seen it all a million times

2nd chorus (2x)

Oh, I want to go, I want to know
Oh, won't you please take me home
I want to see, oh, look at me
Oh, won't you please take me home
Take me down to the paradise city
Where the grass is green and the girls are pretty
Take me home
Take me down to the paradise city
Where the grass is green and the girls are pretty
Oh, won't you please take me home
Take me down (oh yeah), take me down
Oh, won't you please take me home
I want to see, oh, look at me
Oh, won't you please take me home
I want to see, boy, I'm gonna be mean
Oh, oh, take me home
Take me down to the paradise city
Where the grass is green and the girls are pretty
Oh, won't you please take me home
I want to go, I want to know
Oh, won't you please take me home, baby, please

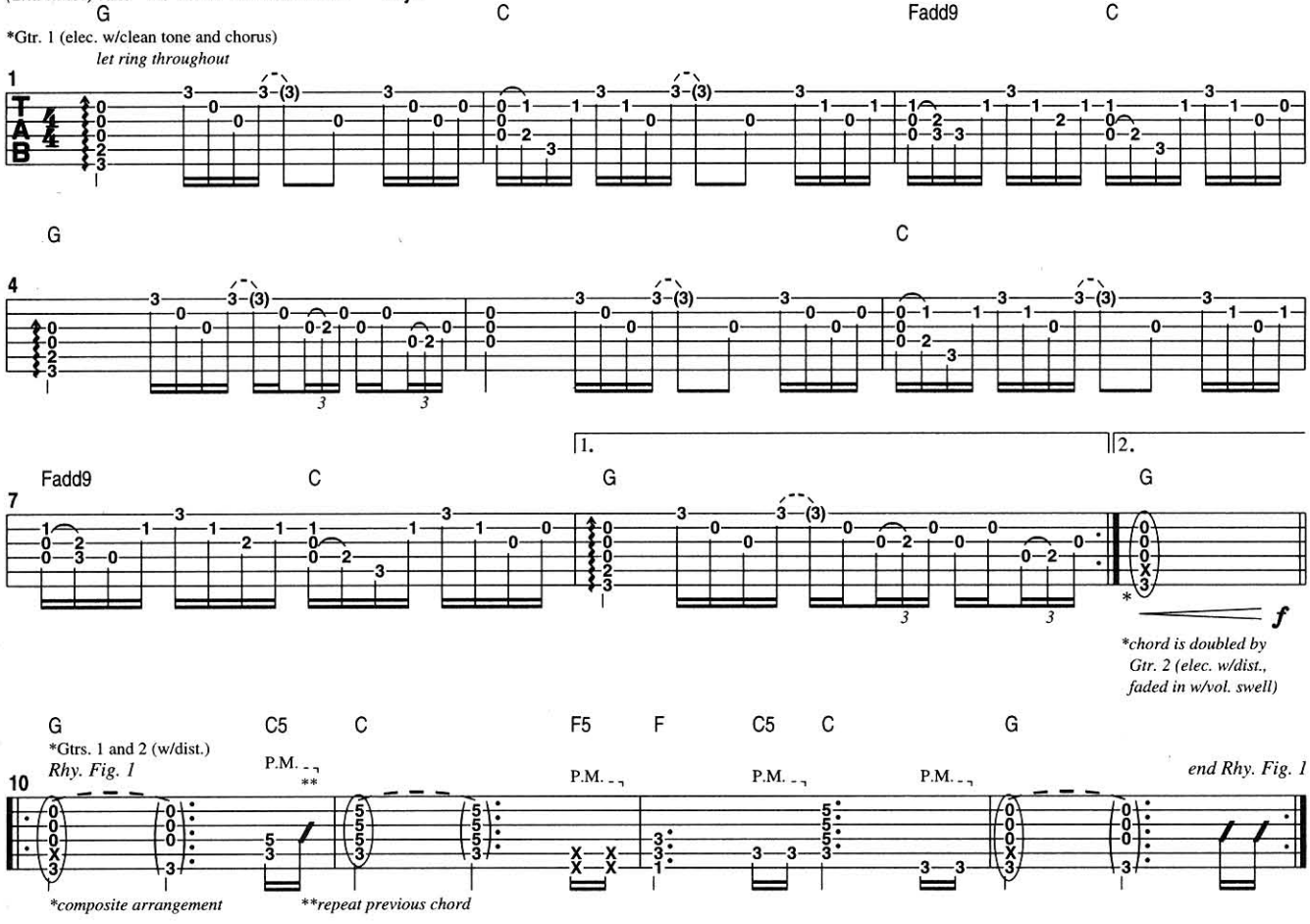
All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭).
All notes and chords sound one half step lower than written (key of G♭).



A Intro (0:00)

Moderate Rock ♩ = 104

(2nd time:) **Take me down to the Paradise City...**



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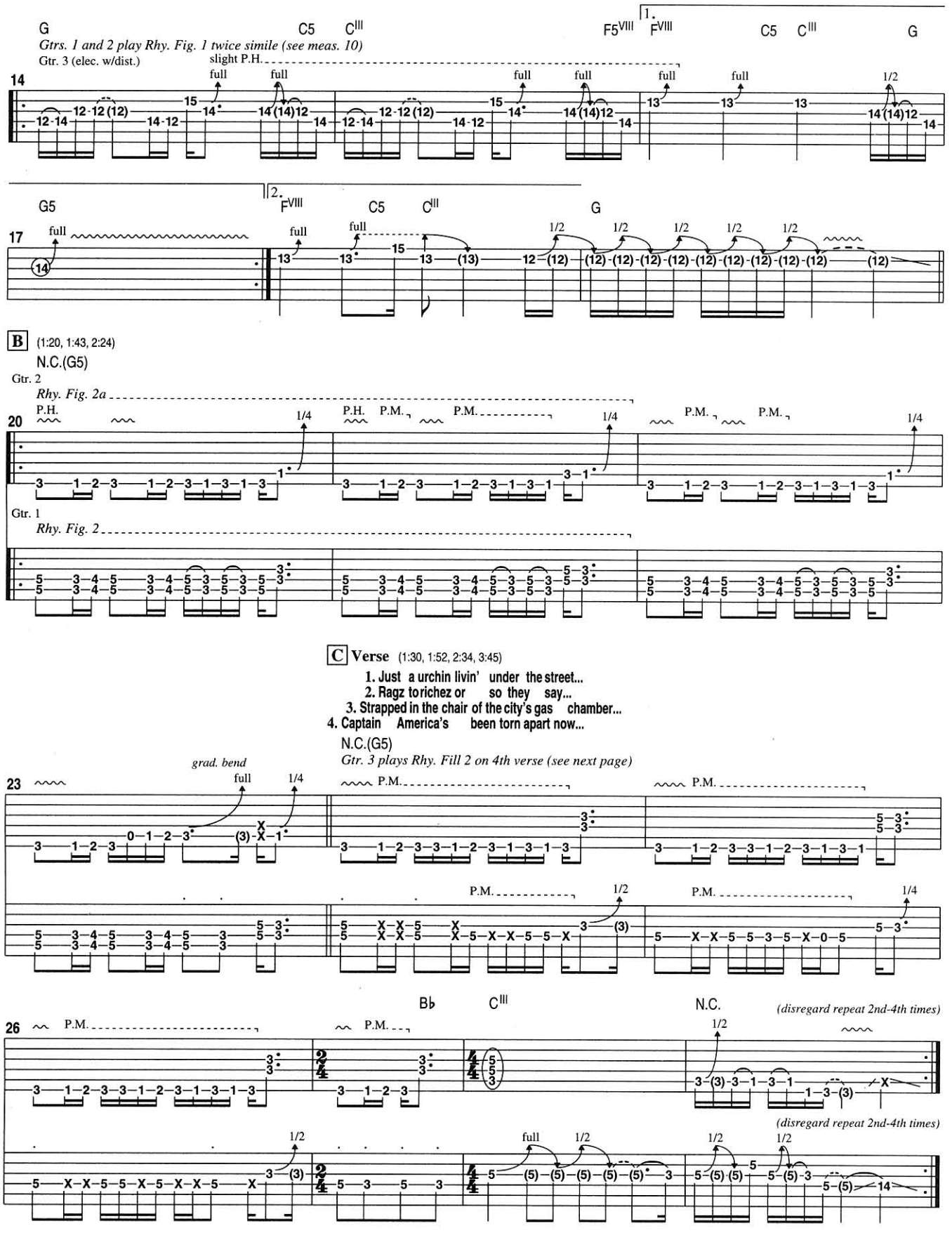
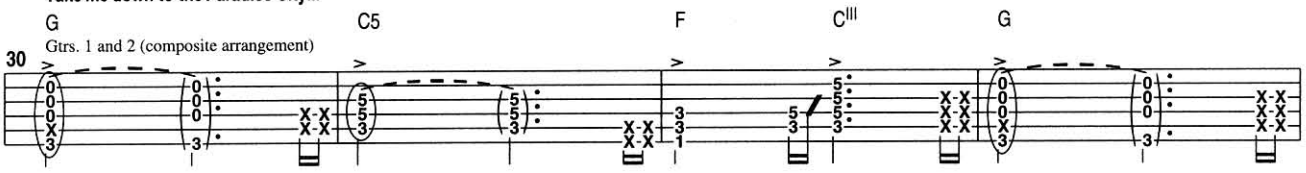

G
C5
C III
F5 VIII
1.
F VIII
C5
C III
G
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see meas. 10)
Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)
slight P.H.
14
full
1/2
G5
2.
F VIII
17
B (1:20, 1:43, 2:24)
N.C.(G5)
Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 2a
P.H.
P.M.
1/4
20
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 2
C Verse (1:30, 1:52, 2:34, 3:45)
1. Just a urchin livin' under the street...
2. Ragz to richez or so they say...
3. Strapped in the chair of the city's gas chamber...
4. Captain America's been torn apart now...
N.C.(G5)
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fill 2 on 4th verse (see next page)
grad. bend
23
B♭
C III
N.C.
(disregard repeat 2nd-4th times)
26

"Paradise City"

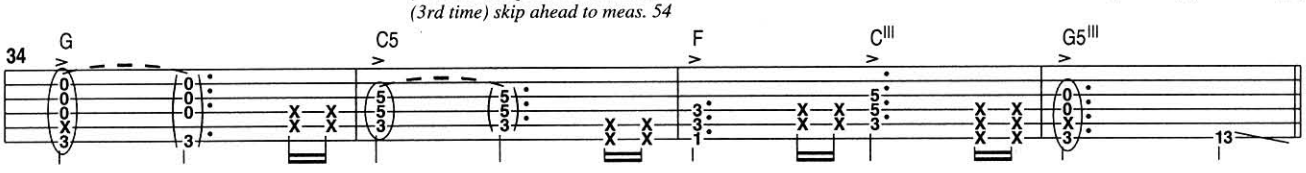
D **Chorus** (2:05, 2:47, 3:58)

Take me down to the Paradise City...

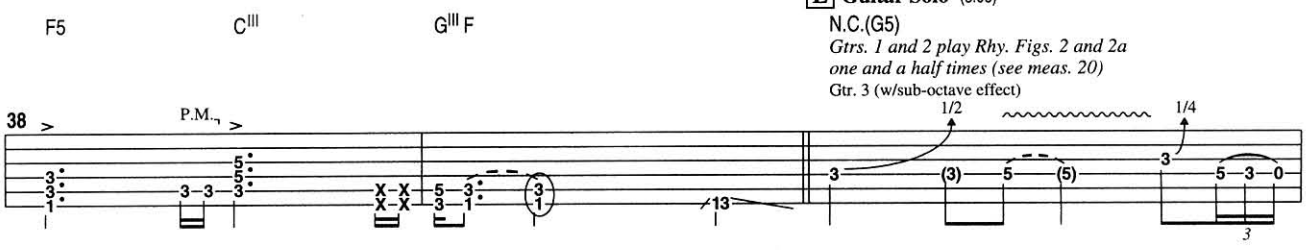


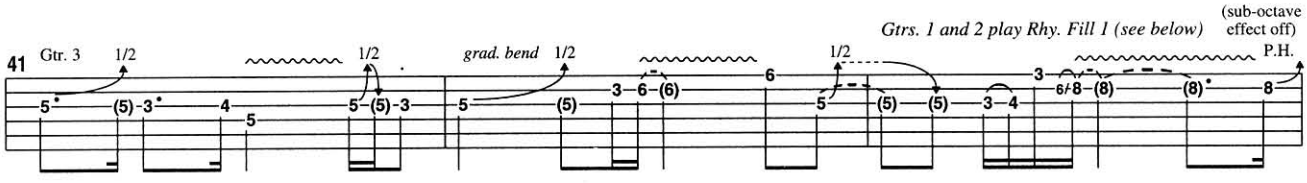
(2nd time) skip ahead to meas. 38
(3rd time) skip ahead to meas. 54

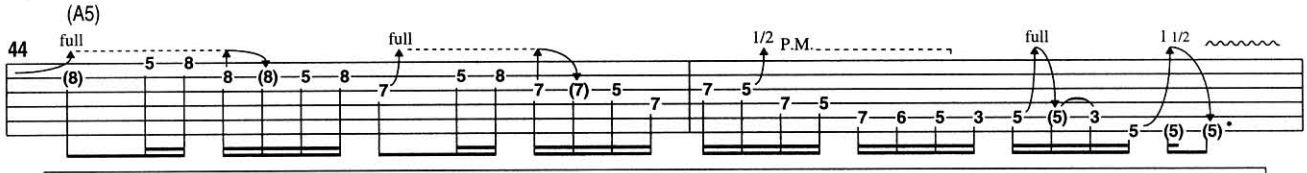
(1st time) go back to **B**

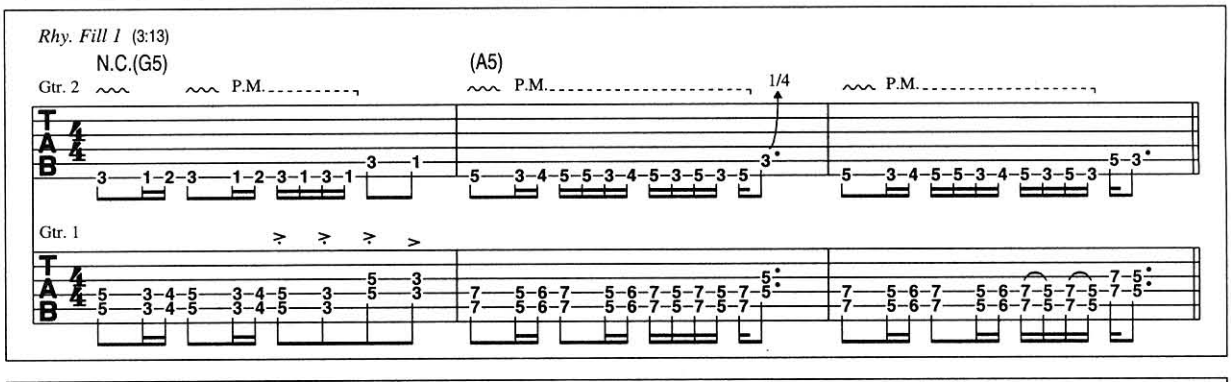


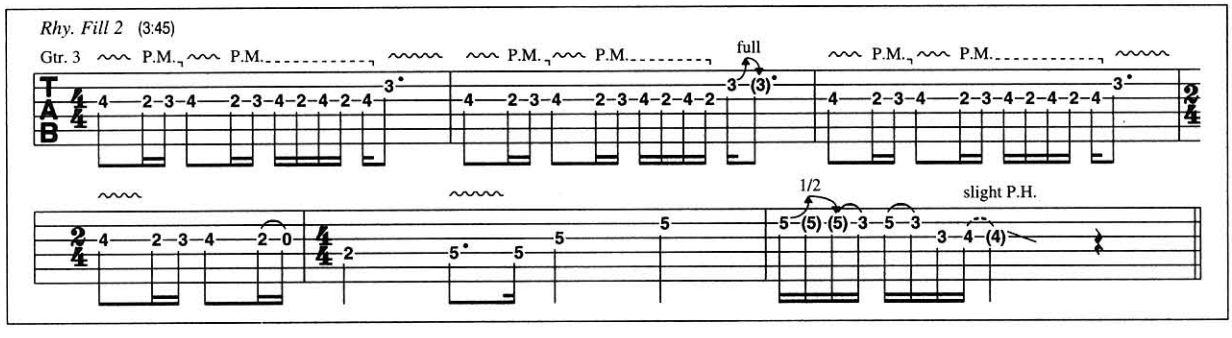
E **Guitar Solo** (3:06)

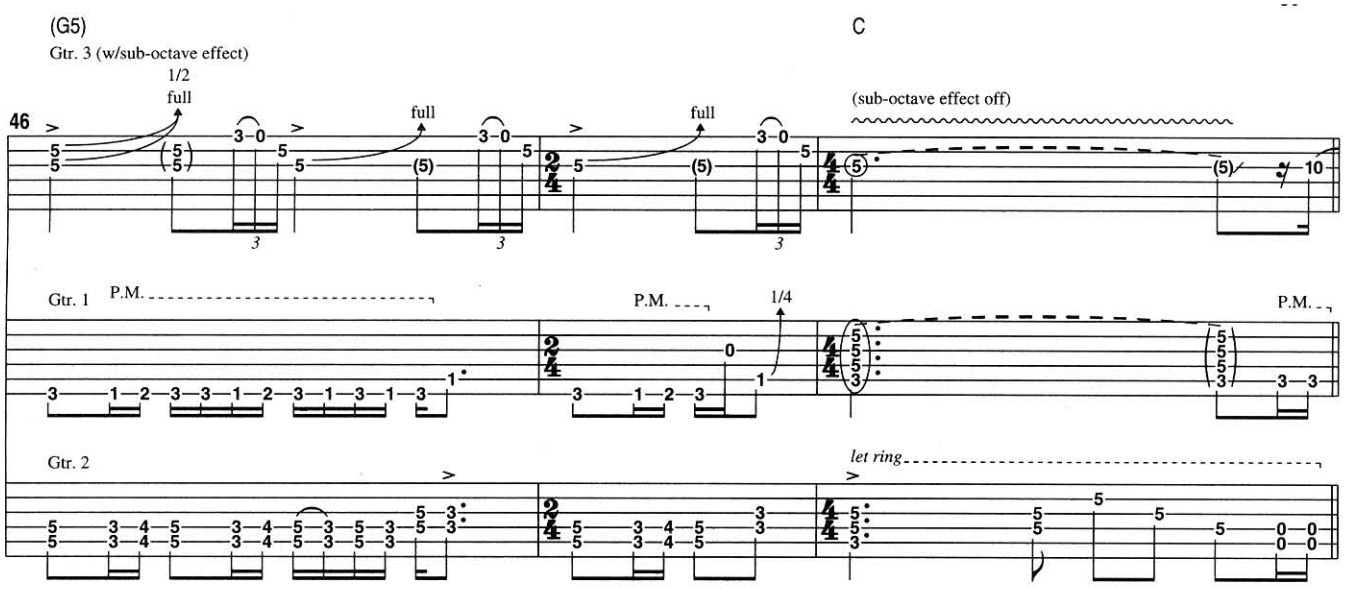




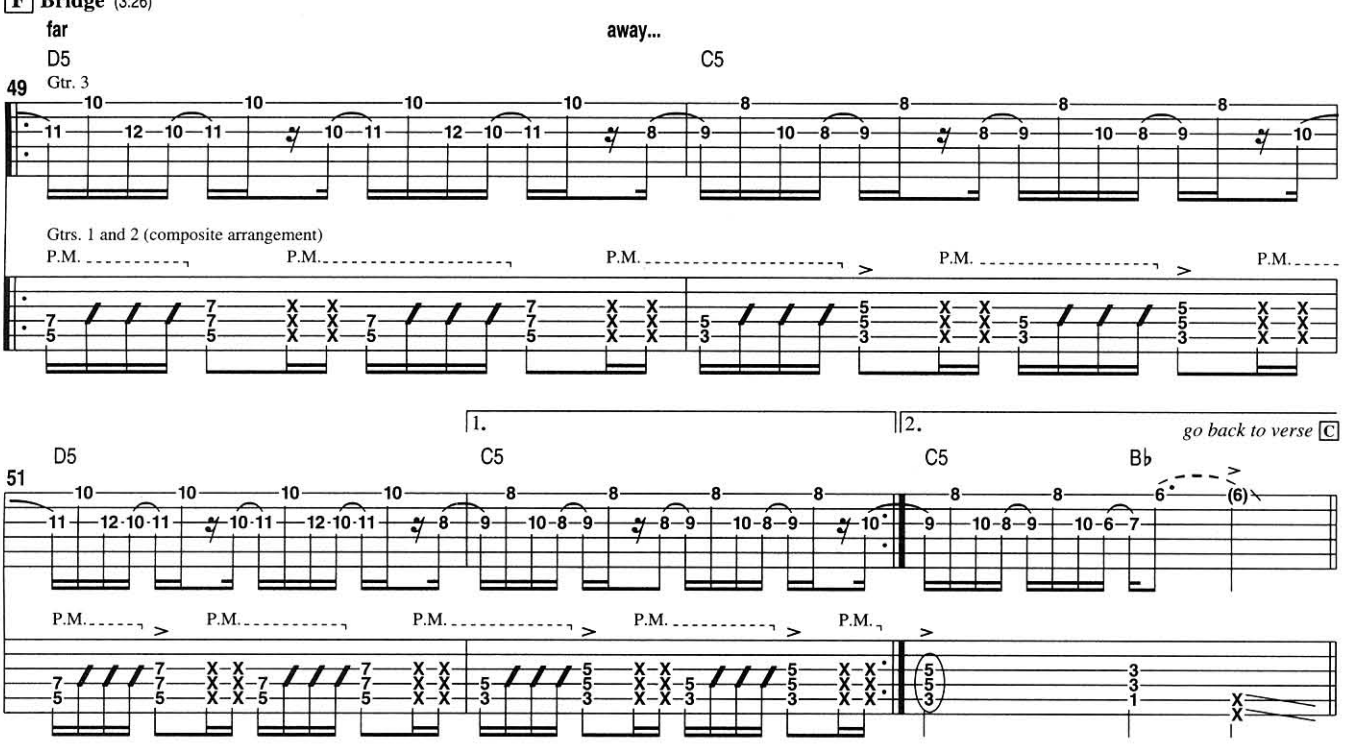






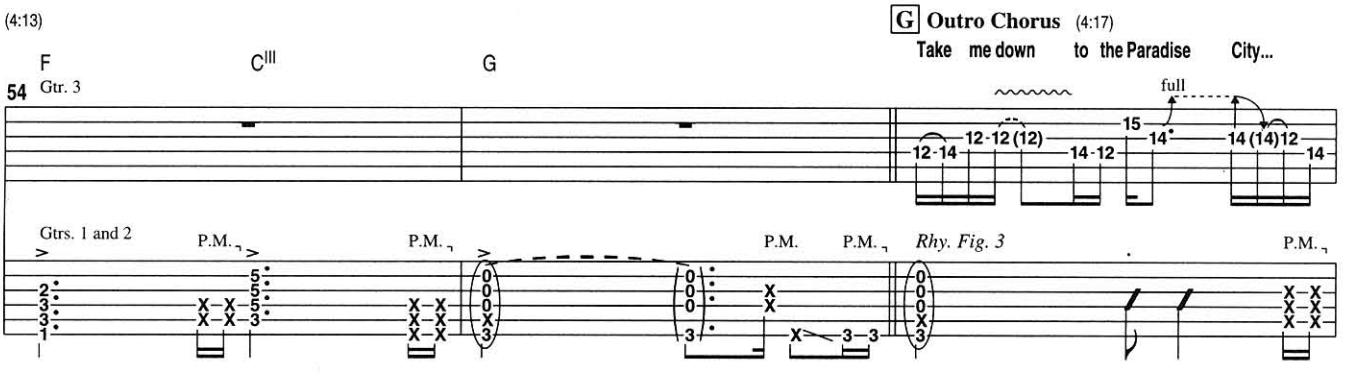


F **Bridge** (3:26)

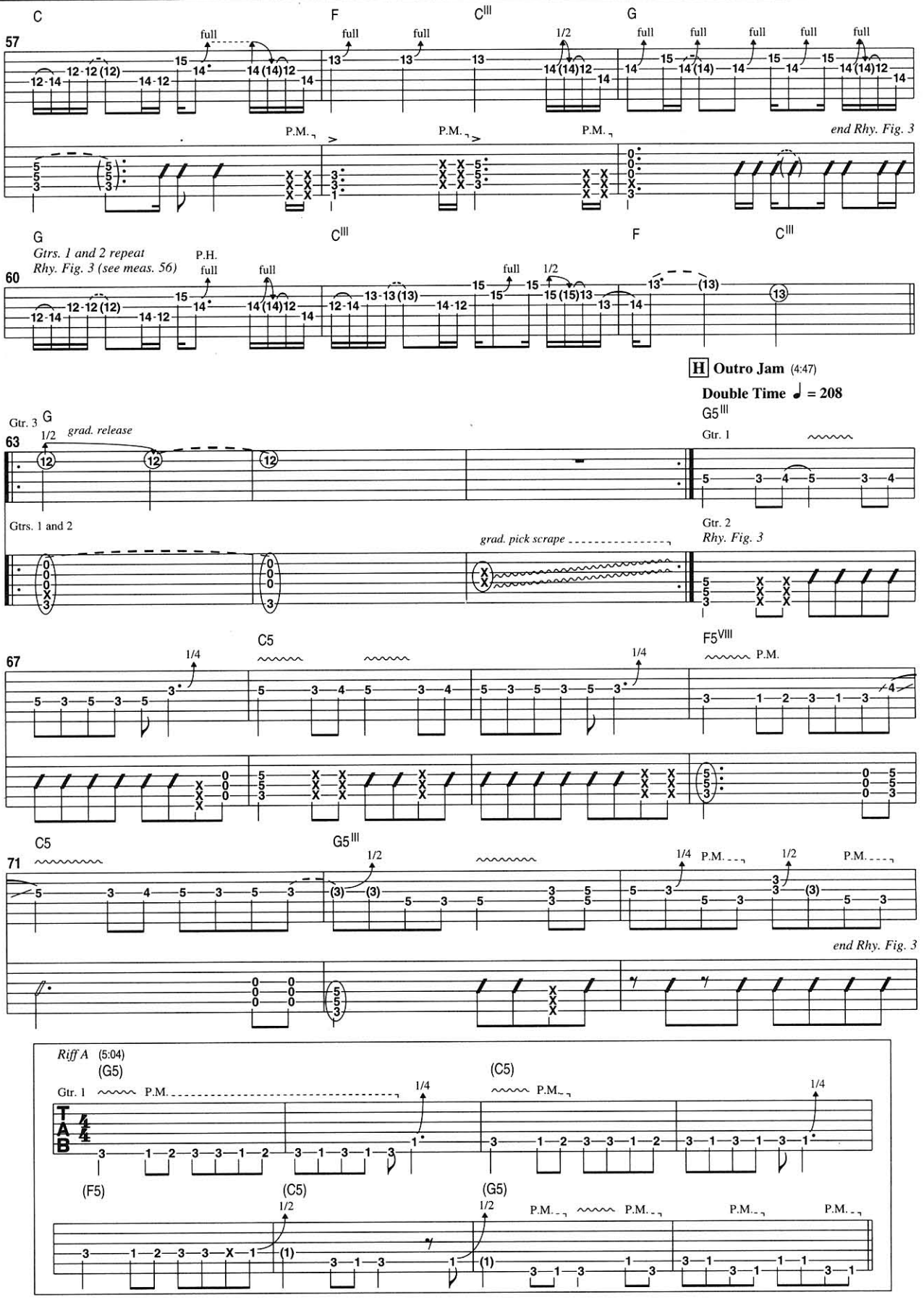


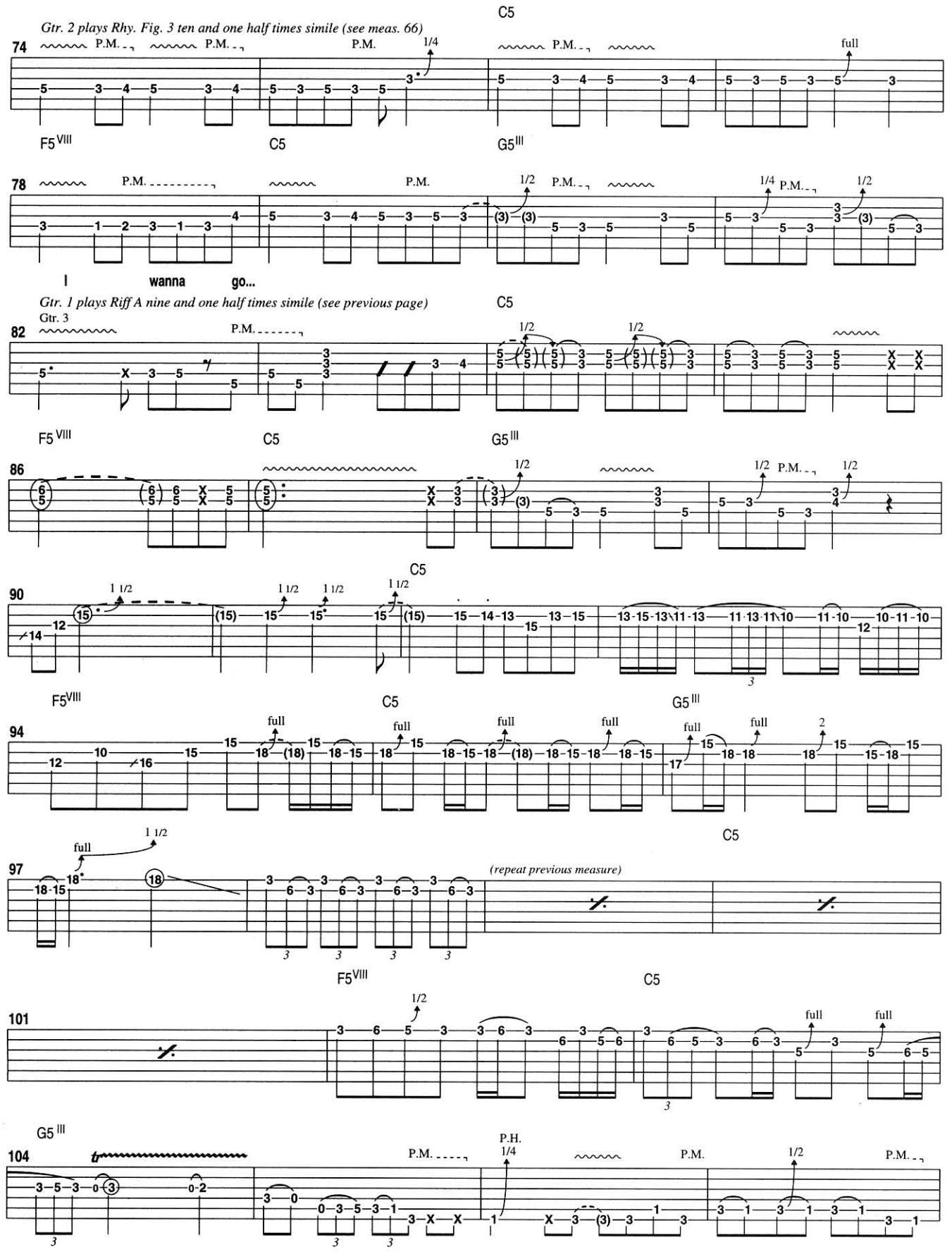
(4:13)

G **Outro Chorus** (4:17)

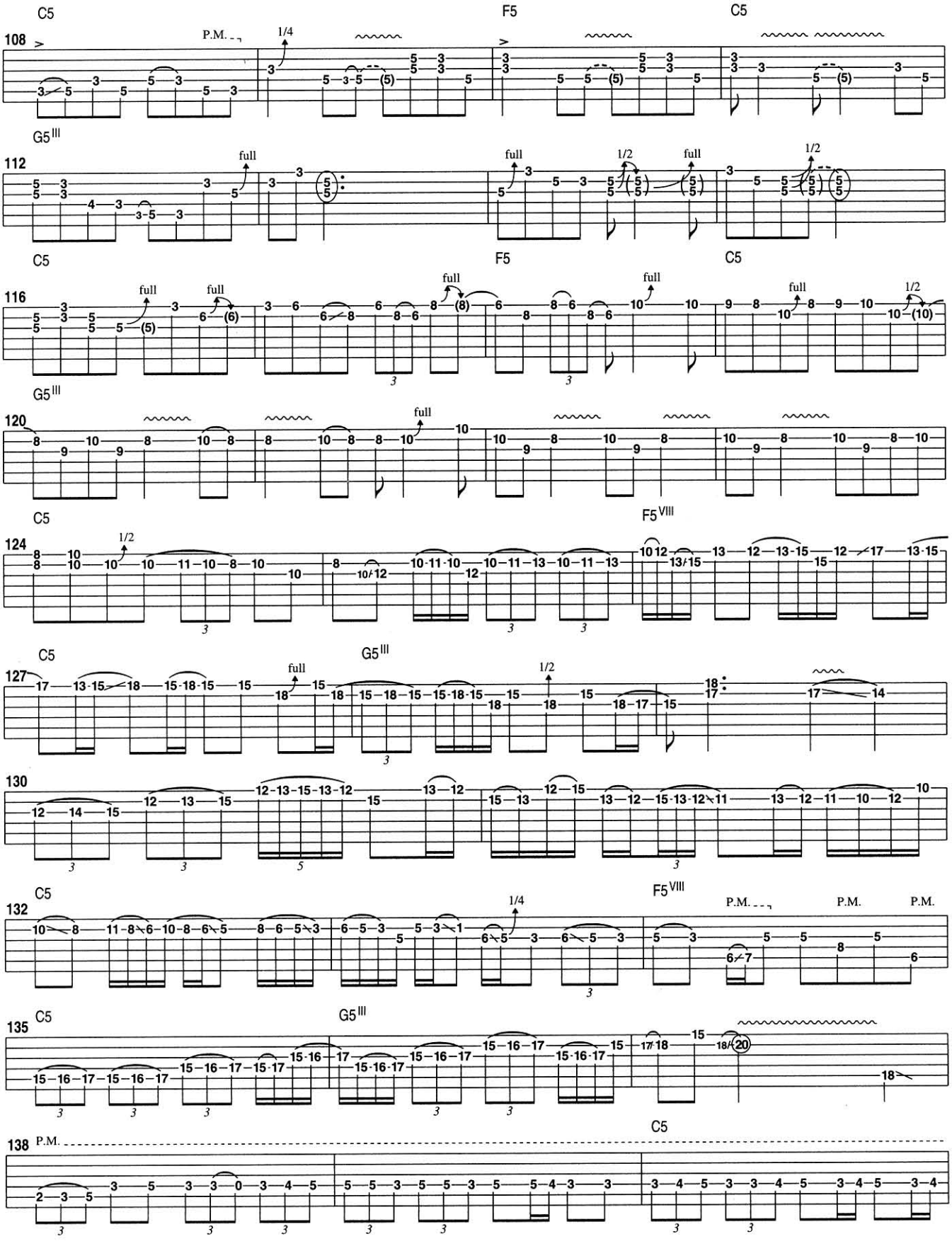


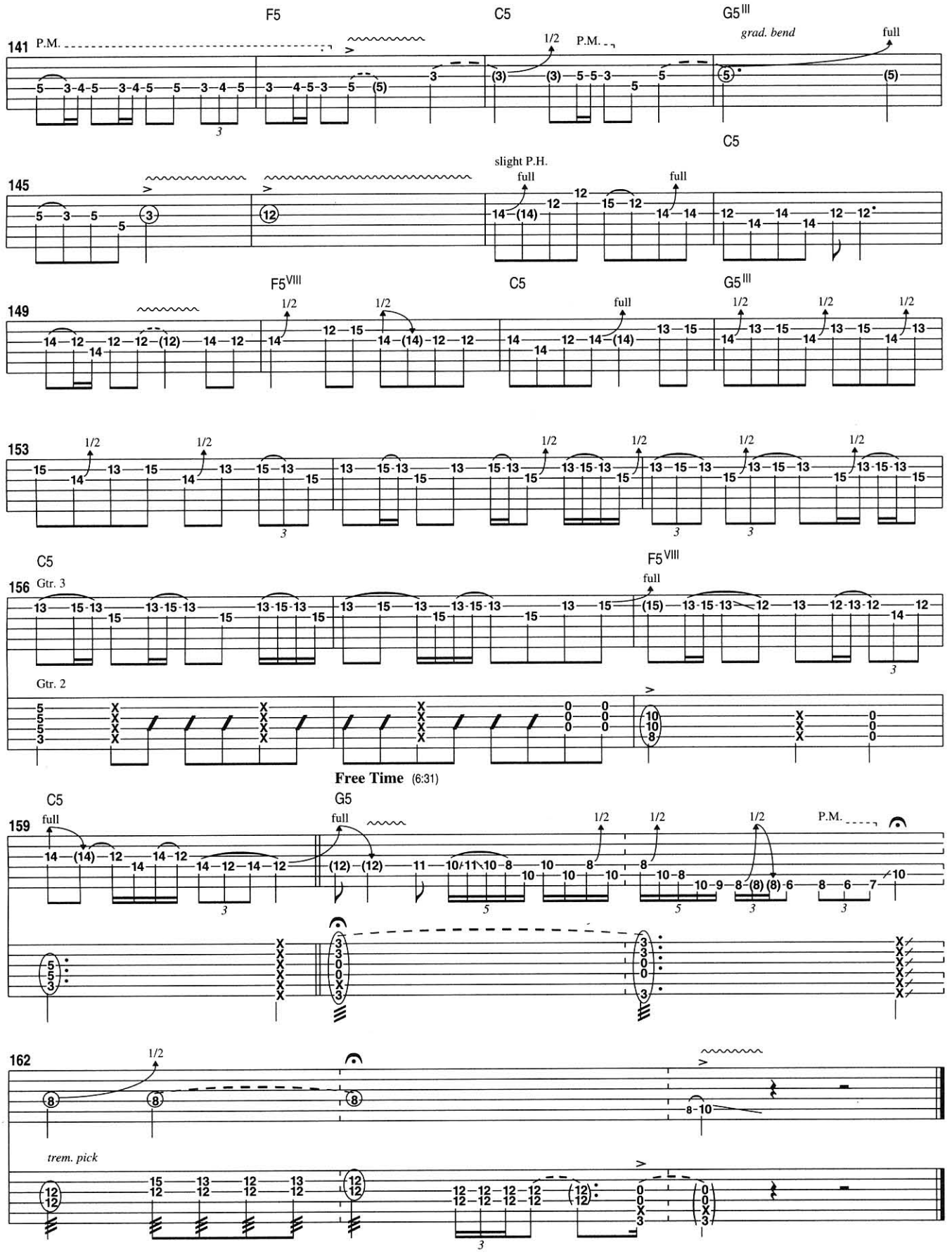
"Paradise City"




C5
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 ten and one half times simile (see meas. 66)
74
P.M.
1/4
full
F5 VIII
C5
G5 III
78
1/2
I wanna go...
Gtr. 1 plays Riff A nine and one half times simile (see previous page)
Gtr. 3
82
86
90
1 1/2
94
full
97
(repeat previous measure)
101
104
P.H.

"Paradise City"




F5
C5
G5 III
141
P.M.
1/2
P.M.
grad. bend
full
C5
145
slight P.H.
full
full
F5 VIII
C5
G5 III
149
1/2
1/2
full
1/2
1/2
1/2
153
1/2
1/2
1/2
1/2
1/2
C5
F5 VIII
156
Gtr. 3
full
Gtr. 2
Free Time (6:31)
C5
G5
159
full
full
1/2
1/2
1/2
P.M.
162
1/2
trem. pick

"Knockin' on Heaven's Door"

As heard on ***Use Your Illusion II*** (GEFFEN)

Words and Music by **Bob Dylan** • Transcribed by **Jeff Perrin**

Mama, take this badge from me
I can't use it anymore
It's getting dark, too dark to see
Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door

chorus:
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door
Hey, hey, hey, hey, yeah
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door
Ay, hey, yeah

Mama, put my guns in the ground
I can't shoot them anymore
That cold black cloud is comin' down
Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door

chorus

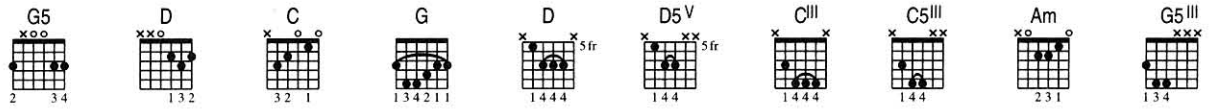
"Well, you just better start sniffin' your own rank subjugation, Jack, 'cause it's just you against your tattered libido, the bank and the mortician forever, man, and it wouldn't be luck if you could get out of life alive"

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door (12x w/vocal ad lib and choir)

Whoa, oh, yeah

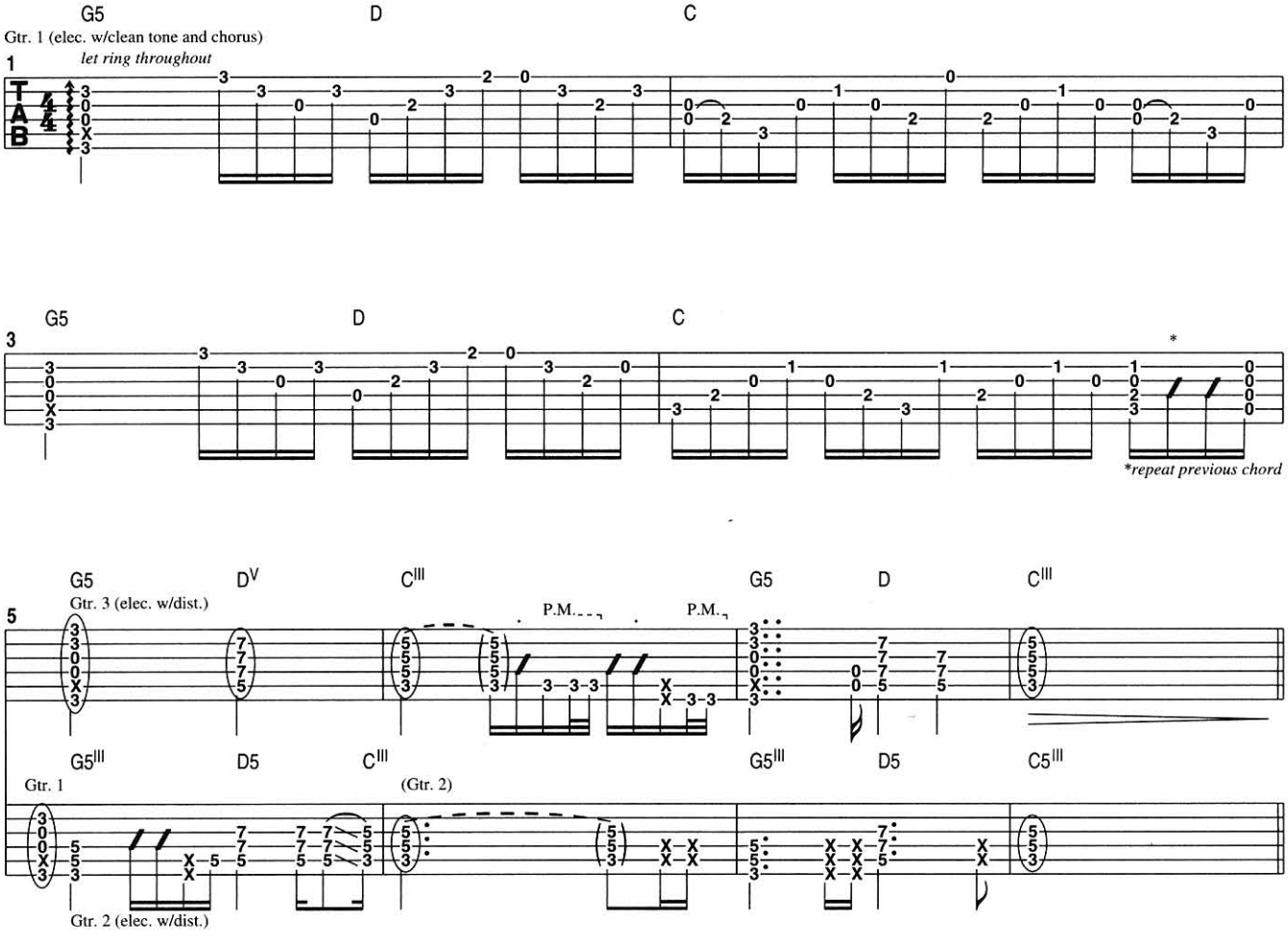
All guitars are tuned down one half step (low to high: E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭).

All notes and chords sound one half step lower than written (key of G♭).



A Intro (0:00)

Slowly ♩ = 64



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B **Verses*** (0:30, 1:58)

1. Mama take this...
2. Mama put my guns...

G5 D Am G5 D

Gtr. 4 plays Fill 1 second time
Gtr. 5 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 twice simile second time
Gtr. 4 (elec. w/clean tone)

(played fingerstyle)

9

**play simile on 2nd verse*

Gtr. 1

C G5 D Am

12 *Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 second time*

C **Chorus** (0:59, 2:27, 4:51)

Knock knock knockin' on heaven's door...

G5 D C G5III D5 C5

Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 1

15

G5 DV

Gtr. 3

Fill 1 (1:58)

G5 D

Gtr. 4

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:09)

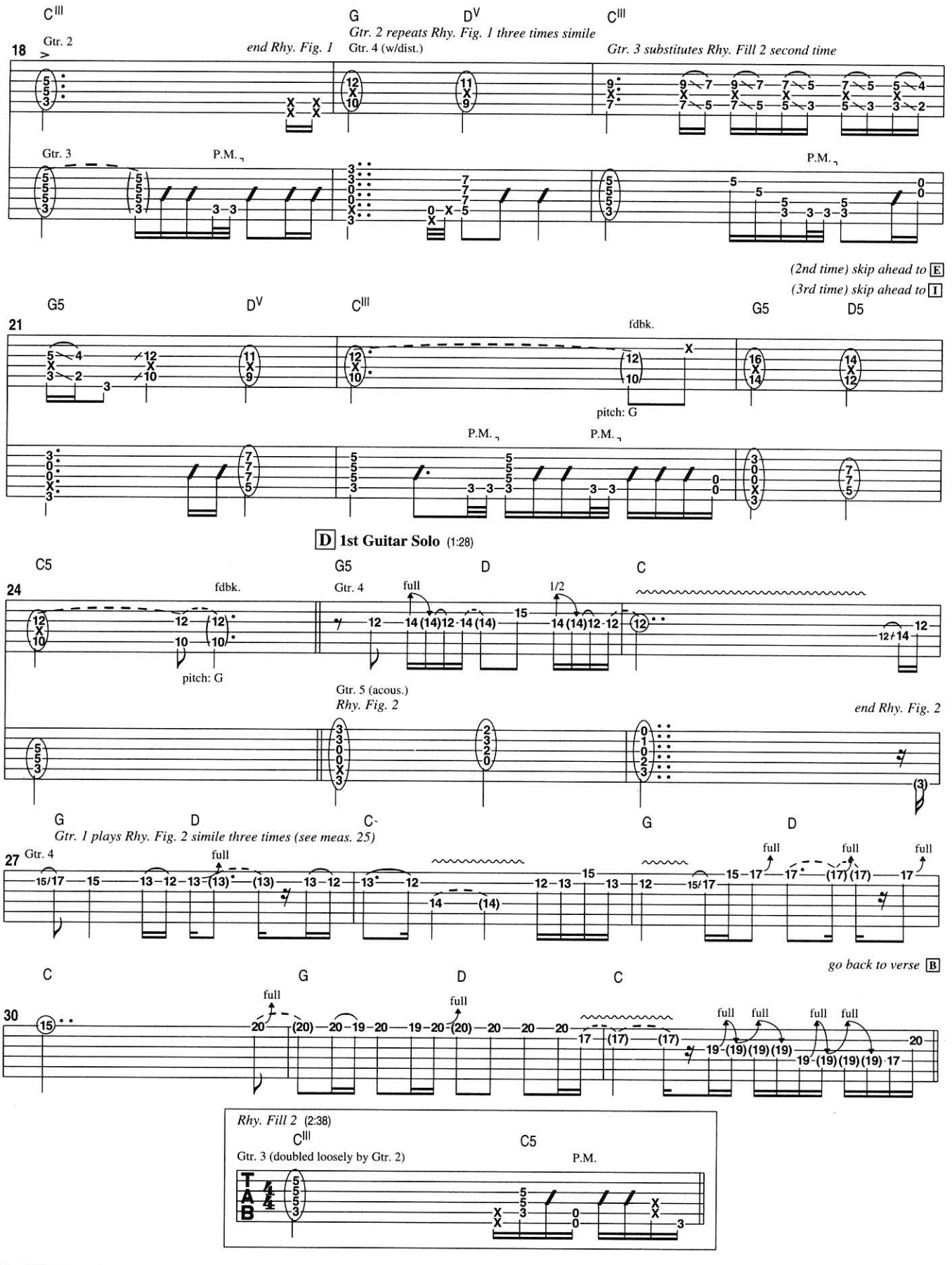
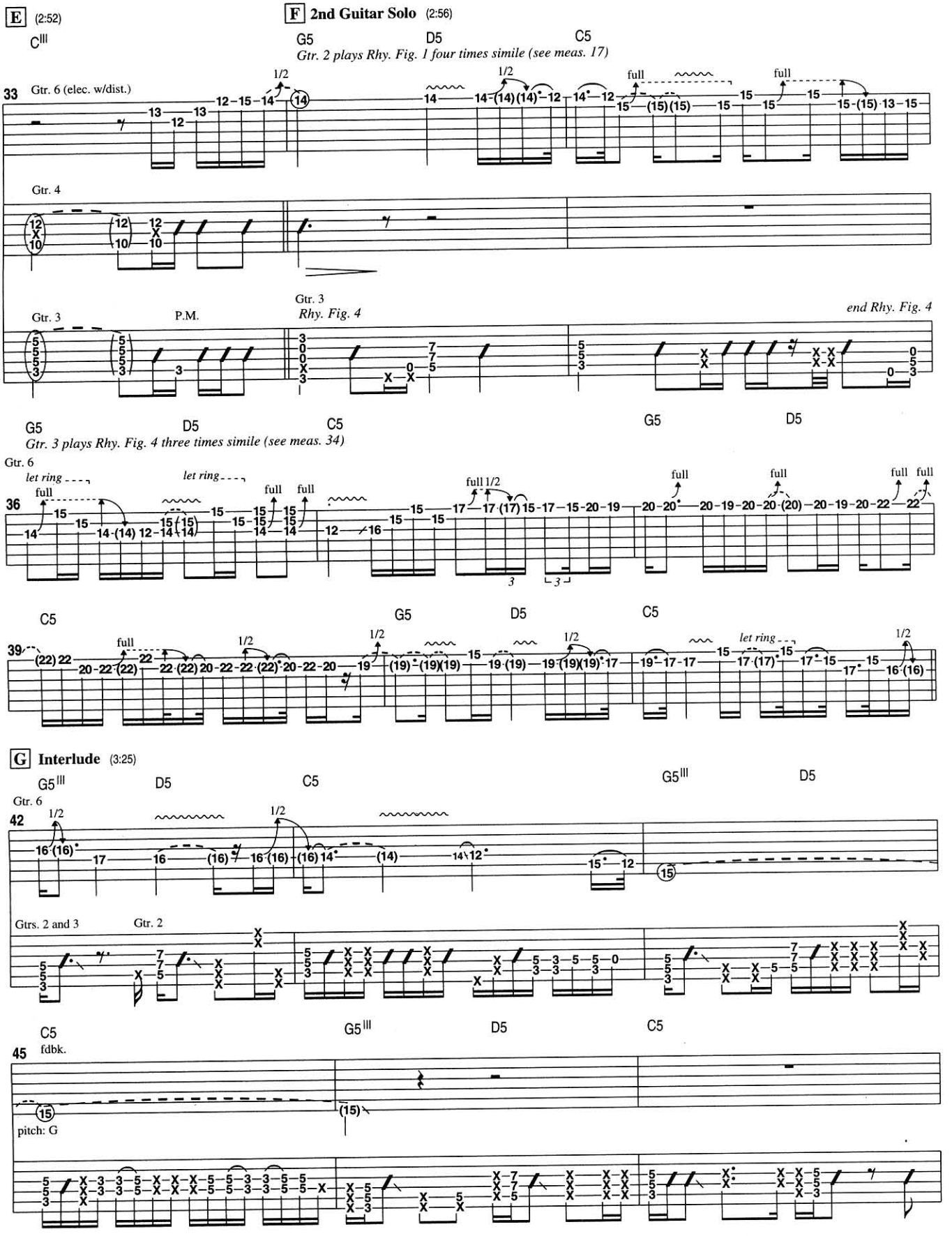
C

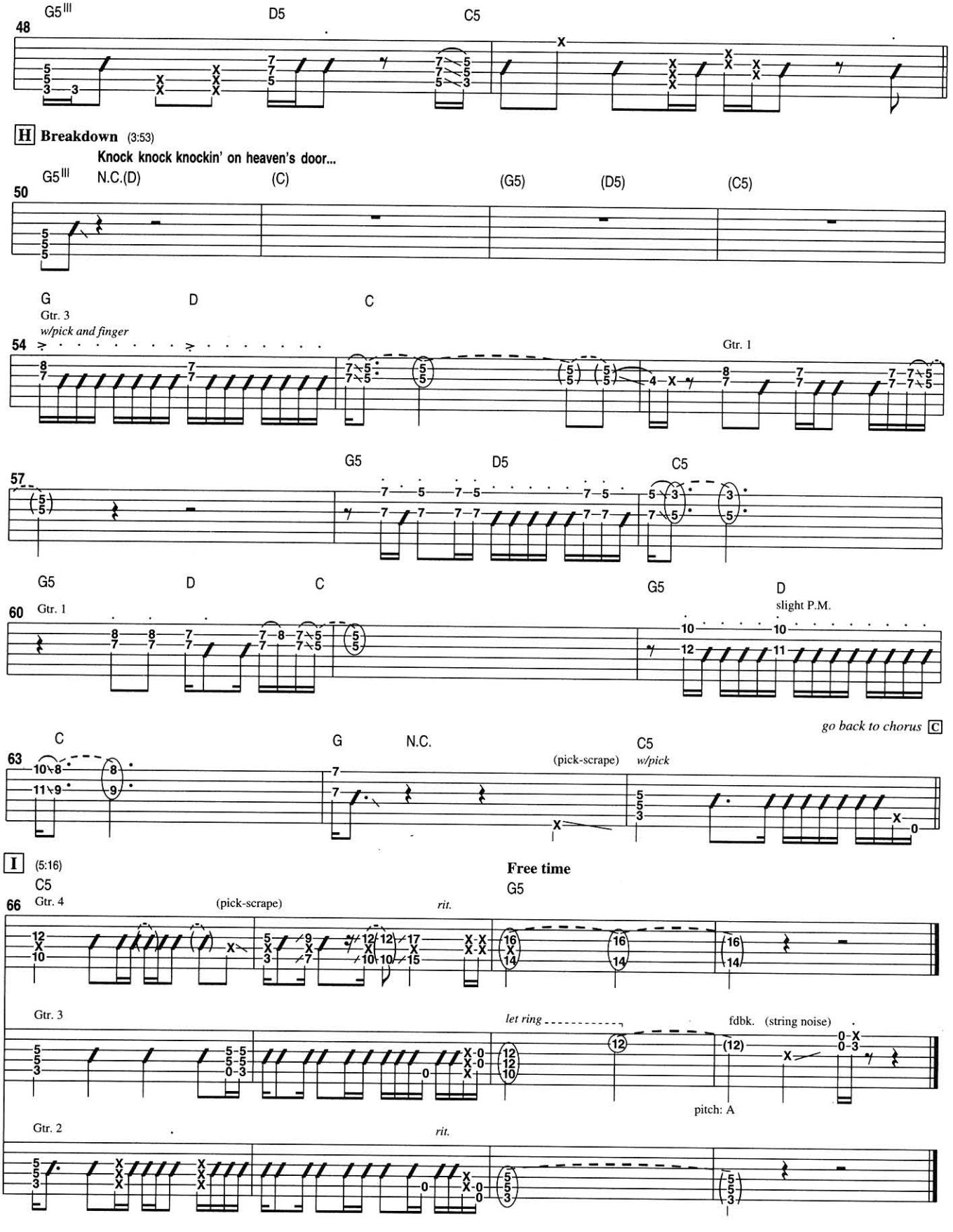
Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 3 (1:58)

G5 D Am G5 D C

Gtr. 5

"Knockin' on Heaven's Door"

E (2:52)
C
F 2nd Guitar Solo (2:56)
G5 D5 C5
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 four times simile (see meas. 17)
33
Gtr. 6 (elec. w/dist.)
Gtr. 4
Gtr. 3
P.M.
Gtr. 3
Rhy. Fig. 4
end Rhy. Fig. 4
G5 D5 C5 G5 D5
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 three times simile (see meas. 34)
Gtr. 6
let ring
36
C5 G5 D5 C5
39
G Interlude (3:25)
G5 D5 C5 G5 D5
Gtr. 6
42
Gtrs. 2 and 3
Gtr. 2
C5 G5 D5 C5
45
fdbk.
pitch: G

"Knockin' on Heaven's Door"

is important to Sorum, a friendly chap who has never been entirely able to shake his "replacement drummer" tag. "I came into the Cult to replace a guy; I came into GN'R to replace a guy," he says. "But I've gotten more love and respect from both those bands than I could have ever possibly imagined, and I feel like I've made good choices with my career decisions. But this is my band, you know? It's really my first band where I can say it's something I helped create."

Since leaving Guns N' Roses in 1997, the same year McKagan quit, Sorum has immersed himself in a wide variety of musical projects, including film scores, production gigs and even a solo album (*Hollywood Zen*, due out this fall). But the bitter aftertaste of his GN'R exit still rankles. "We got the shitty end of the deal, me, Slash and Duff," he says. "We got kinda kicked to the curb, you know? Not that we have anything to prove, but we do."

Though Slash, McKagan and Sorum had all contributed in various combinations to several post-GN'R projects, they all admit that they'd been leery of doing anything that would be seen as a reunion. "We didn't want to make that statement," says Duff. "We were very careful about how we did it. I'd get a call from Izzy once in a while—'Hey, you wanna play on my record?' Or Slash would come through town, so I'd see him. But it just wasn't in the cards until now."

Deciding to carry on in the wake of the Buckcherry misfire, the three musicians invited Dave Kushner to join the party. Kushner and Slash had been friends in their L.A. junior high school days but had never played music together, since Kushner didn't become serious about playing guitar until after Slash had moved to a different neighborhood. Having paid his dues in such L.A. punk and hard rock bands as Wasted Youth, Electric Love Hogs and Infectious Grooves, Kushner moved to Japan a few years ago to seek his musical fortune. He didn't find it, but he did run into McKagan in a Tokyo nightclub.

"I was playing in this band called Zilch," Kushner recalls. "It was this crazy thing with a guitarist named Hidé—he's big in Japan—and Joey Castillo from Queens of the Stone Age on drums. Duff was there with his band, Loaded. We'd met before, and we just started talking and hanging out." Kushner eventually joined Loaded, and when the rhythm guitar slot opened up in what would become Velvet Revolver, he seemed like the obvious choice.

"Dave's real forte is sounds," says McKagan. "He's got a million different pedals, and that adds a whole other 'mad scientist' element."

"He's got really good ideas," Slash agrees. "Dave's as sober as a judge; he used to be a real fuckup at one point, but now he's got this great work ethic."

"I've always been into really tweaky sound effects," says the deceptively mild-mannered Kushner. "I think it was because I could never afford good amps, so I always bought tons of effects—wah-wah pedals that sound like talk boxes, that kind of shit. In this band, I'm just really trying to do something that takes it a little further from being a straight-up, five-piece, two-guitar rock band."

While Kushner's predeliction for Fernandes guitars, Bogner heads and a whole arsenal of Line 6 and Boss pedals might seem at odds with Slash's Les Paul–into-Marshall approach, the two guitarists quickly meshed. But when Izzy Stradlin' suddenly started showing up at rehearsals, Kushner began to wonder if his days in the band were numbered. "Izzy just came out of nowhere, as Izzy does," Slash says, laughing. "Poor Dave. Izzy's sitting there, this ominous presence, and Dave's thinkin', That's the original guitarist from Guns N' Roses. Am I still gonna have a job? But we're real loyal people. It wasn't like, 'Hey, Dave, we're gonna work on some songs with Izzy; call us back in a couple of weeks!' When Izzy was there, we just played with three guitarists."

Stradlin' hung out and jammed with his old mates for several weeks, but Slash and McKagan both say there was never any real possibility of their old guitarist joining their new band. "The Izzy thing probably got misconstrued a little bit," says McKagan. "I think he wanted to come in, like, 'Let's go out on tour right away! I've got eight songs, let's go! We'll do some covers; Duff and I will sing!' [*laughs*] But Matt and Slash and I were more like, 'If we're gonna do this, we're gonna have to do it so it's amazing.' I've heard a lot of fans saying, 'Why don't you have Izzy in the band now?' Well, this isn't cut out for him; he's more of a guy who will be here one day and be gone the next, and you won't know where he's gone to. But he added a new energy that we probably needed at that point."

"I WAS REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL AND GETTING MY FINANCE DEGREE, WITH A MINOR IN ACCOUNTING. BUT VELVET REVOLVER CHANGED EVERYTHING." —DUFF McKAGAN

"You have to understand our relationship with Izzy," Slash explains. "Izzy's always been the guy who's sort of there and sort of *not* there. Duff and I have seen Izzy periodically; I've played on his records a couple of times, and Duff has done the same thing. And then he called up right when we were in the midst of writing, and he actually came over and brought a couple of songs with him. And then we just started hanging out and jamming, and we wrote, like, 10 or so songs. It was just a lot of fun, but he didn't want to deal with the fuckin' long haul at all. As soon as we started to physically audition singers, we didn't see him again." Slash laughs. "He's so fucking shattered from his experience [with Axl] that he refuses to *ever* do anything involving a singer again!"

ARMED WITH a brace of new songs, the band began the endless, agonizing process of auditioning lead singers. "I couldn't envision the guy or the voice or anything like that," says Slash. "I just knew it had to be pretty unique; we already knew what the music was like, so it had to be somebody who could work with that." After placing ads in *Rolling Stone* and various British music papers, the band was deluged by CDs of singers from around the globe.

"We actually got a lot of good stuff, a lot of interesting stuff," says McKagan. "There were some guys that came out that were really cool—they just didn't work out with us, you know?" Among the promising prospects were Travis Meeks of Days of the New, Kelly Shaefer of Neurotica, Mike Matijevic of Steelheart, Todd Kerns of Age of Electric and girl rocker Beth Hart. Former Skid Row belter Sebastian Bach seemed like the odds-on favorite, but even he fell short. "He's an old friend of ours, and I love the guy dearly," McKagan told radio host Riki Rachtman this past June. "The problem we ran up against with Bas [is that] we sounded like Skid Row."

There was, of course, one singer they'd set their sights on all along, but it didn't look like Scott Weiland was available. "He was our first guy that we wanted to work with," Slash reveals, "but he was still in Stone Temple Pilots, and it was too politically fucked up."

"I kind of got to know Duff because our wives had become friends," Weiland explains. "Both of our wives are models, and they'd gotten to know each other, so we went out to dinner a couple times. I'd known Dave, because the Electric Love Hogs used to play with my band when we were both playing clubs in Los Angeles, back in the day. And I knew Matt because we were in rehab together when he first got clean. So I knew those guys, and then Duff and I kind of got to know each other, and he mentioned that they were playing together again. And then I got a call from Slash, and they gave me a CD; I listened to the music, but at that time I was still kind of entrenched with STP. It was sort of unclear where we were going; we were trying to get out of our deal with Atlantic, and we wanted to sign a new contract with a new label. So I was unable to commit, but I kind of kept that thought alive. I waited around for things to start regenerating with STP, and it just sort of didn't happen. So I talked to those guys again and went down to their rehearsal place."

By February 2003, Velvet Revolver had received commissions to record songs for two different film soundtracks but still had no lead singer. Rather than just jam with Weiland, the band invited him to record a cover of Pink Floyd's "Money" with them for the soundtrack to *The Italian Job*. "It gave us a

chance to jump into the studio right away and start the creative process," says Weiland. When that worked, the band decided to try an original for the movie *The Hulk* and gave the singer another CD of instrumentals to listen to. One of them, a track written mostly by Sorum, would become "Set Me Free."

"The first CD that Slash gave me had a lot of music that Izzy had written with them, and it was a lot more classic-based," Weiland remembers. "I wasn't as excited about that stuff, you know? But when I got the next batch of songs, it was like, 'Okay, there's a handful of songs in here that I definitely feel I can wrap my head around.' And one of the riffs was the 'Set Me Free' riff. It reminded me of a cross between a classic STP thing and a classic GN'R track. I think it was a good song for us to start with—not pushing the envelope too much. You couldn't come out with something too 'out there' or people would be like, 'This doesn't make sense!' "

With no remaining ties to his old band, label or management, Weiland was at last in a position to join Slash, McKagan, Sorum and Kushner. Except for one big problem—his addiction to heroin, which had severely reasserted itself during the previous year. "I was definitely in a rut, emotionally and spiritually," the singer admits. "I'd fallen off the wagon pretty hard, and I was very depressed—like a suicidal depression. I was separated from my wife, I'd really totally distanced myself from all my friends and I was totally isolated. I was living in my L.A. house by myself, and I didn't want to see anybody; the only person I saw was my drug dealer. It was incredibly lonely, and I really didn't see a way out of it, you know? So, like, when [the Velvet Revolver opportunity] happened, I was forced to be around people that were, like, you know, *clean*, and who had a positive outlook on things. It kind of gave me a different way to look at things, although I was still in it at the time. When I first got with these guys, I was still totally in it."

While it seemed ironic to many observers that three former Guns N' Roses members had essentially traded one major headcase for another, Slash insists that—a shared history of blown gigs and canceled tours aside—Weiland's issues represent far less of a hurdle than Axl's. "His work ethic's amazing, and he's an amazing talent; he's been constantly blowing my mind. So at the point where we got together, it was like, 'The drug thing? We can work with that. We've been around that corner so many times.' It's not like the other guy, which is just irretrievably fucked-up and chemical-free!"

"It was out in the open in the beginning, so it wasn't like this heavy thing," says McKagan of Weiland's addiction. "We've all been through it, and he was looking for a way out of it, so it was kind of perfect timing."

"Everyone knew that it couldn't last that way, I couldn't stay in that situation forever, and that it was gonna have to change," says Weiland. "But no one was like, 'You've gotta change this now!' I just kind of, on my own, started trying to make a change. I was trying to detox, and I couldn't do it; I tried again, and I couldn't do it. They were trying to be supportive about it, but I just couldn't do it. So I guess God intervened," he laughs, "and I got busted!"

On May 18, just days after he'd told *Rolling Stone* that he had officially become the band's singer, Weiland was arrested in Burbank after a police officer pulled him over for driving without headlights, then allegedly found heroin and cocaine in the car. The arrest marked the fourth time Weiland had been busted on drug charges; he'd previously been collared in California in 1995 and 1997, and New York in 1998. In 1999, he served a stint in prison when a Los Angeles judge ruled that the singer had violated the terms of his probation with a heroin overdose, and in 2001, he was arrested in Las Vegas on a domestic violence charge involving his wife. But rather than ditch Weiland over his latest brush with the law, the Velvet Revolver guys closed ranks around their grateful singer.

"They fuckin' had my back," says Weiland. "Totally, selflessly, those guys were there for me. Like, I'm surrounded with a group of guys that are *all* fucking junkies, you know? They've done everything that I've done to the hilt, so there's no judgment there. After I got busted, my last fix was the morning after I got out of jail, just to get well. I went to the doctor and picked up some medication to kick with, and Duff and Dave flew me up to Seattle. We went up to the mountains, and I started kicking up there."

McKagan, who had gotten clean in the mid Nineties through an intensive martial arts regimen, contacted a teacher he knew in Seattle and booked himself, Kushner and Weiland into an extended stay at a martial arts retreat. "Scott had done his fair share of rehabs, and it just wasn't clicking," he says. "He knew the way I'd gotten sober, and he'd asked me about it."

"It was two-a-day sessions, starting in the morning with a run and tai-chi," Weiland remembers. "And then a light training session in Wing Chun Kung Fu, and then a class working into a heavier session. And then lunch, and then later on in the day a harder training session. It was pretty intense, and I'm still involved in it."

One month later, the band was back in L.A. for the show at the El Rey. Weiland looked shaky at the preliminary press conference, but he poured every ounce of pent-up rage and frustration into the band's raucous set, which included two originals ("Set Me Free" and "Slither") and covers of STP's "Sex Type Thing," GN'R's "It's So Easy," the Sex Pistols' "Bodies" and Nirvana's "Negative Creep."

"He's a wild card," says McKagan of the singer. "And it's great, because you don't know what he's going to do. The night we played, he was in the audience; he was fucking rolling across the stage. It's not a safe environment—Scott could come after you!" He laughs. "And that's missing from rock and roll—that dangerous, 'What's gonna happen?' thing."

"That was really the birth of the band, that show," says Weiland. "After that, we just knew we were gonna move ahead full steam without looking back."

"I WAS LIVING IN MY L.A. HOUSE BY MYSELF, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE ANYBODY; THE ONLY PERSON I SAW WAS MY DRUG DEALER." —SCOTT WEILAND

THE SUCCESS OF the El Rey show inspired a label bidding war that ended when Velvet Revolver inked a deal with RCA after Clive Davis himself came forward to vie for the band's affections. (Thanks to his financial schooling, McKagan can now effectively translate record company contracts to his cohorts.) In August, Scott Weiland was sentenced to three years probation, with enforced counseling sessions and continuation of his rehab. The singer seems to be responding well to the band's brotherly support and is clearly firing on all creative cylinders. "Melodically, arrangement-wise and lyrically, I'm happy with the whole package of where I'm at right now," he says. "The music is just really exciting to me. There's enough of a classic feel—just like this fuckin' stab-you-in-the-gut rock and roll, this fuck-you rebellion. And then there's also total modern experimentalism going on."

The band is currently whittling its backlog of 60-plus songs down to 16 favorites, while auditioning prospective producers for its debut record, with an eye on an early 2004 release. "The record has to be 'in your face,' " says McKagan. "It's gotta sound like us. We just want guitar, guitar, bass, drums and vocals, everything just bashing you, with as little between the mic, the chord and the tape as possible."

As long as their producer search is shorter than their hunt for a lead singer, Velvet Revolver's debut album may well be out before Axl Rose puts the finishing touches on Guns N' Roses' long-awaited *Chinese Democracy*. But really, being able to wag a middle-finger salute at Axl isn't the point; that these five scarred-but-smarter rock vets have come together around something new and vital is the real story.

"The people who are skeptical, it'll take us touring a bit," says Weiland. "They'll understand when they see it."

The little girls, of course, already understand. "I was driving down the street last week," says Sorum, "and a couple of little chicks pulled up in a car next to me and yelled, 'Hey, you're Matt from Velvet Revolver!' I'll tell you, man, that was the best fuckin' day of my life!" ■

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